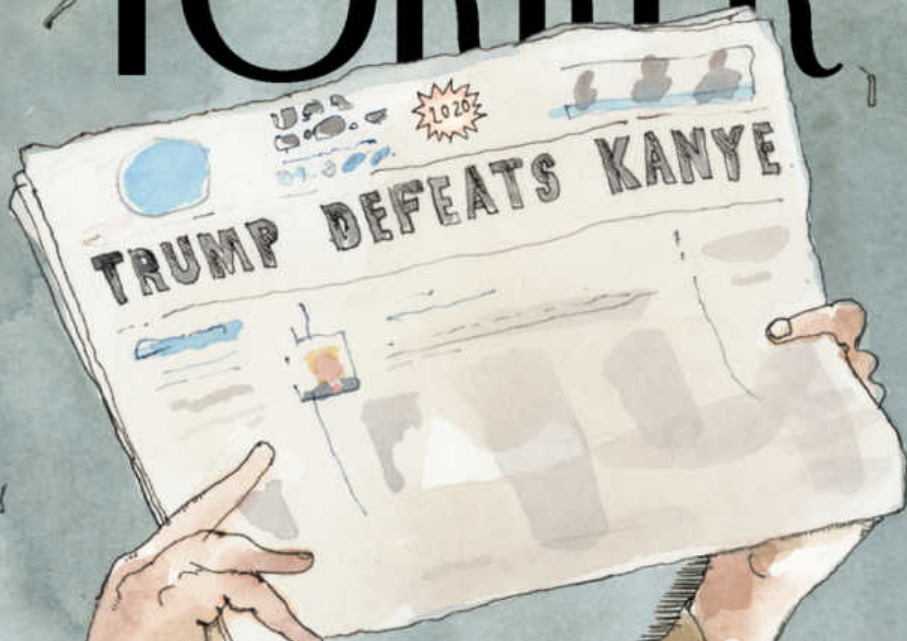


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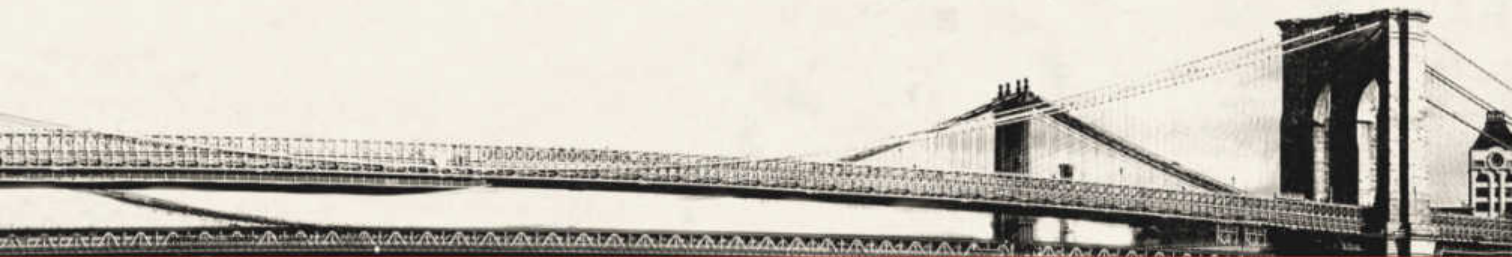


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## CONTRIBUTORS

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**OLIVER SACKS** ("FILTER FISH," P. 40), who died last week, was a longtime contributor to *The New Yorker* and the author of thirteen books, including "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat" and "Awakenings." His memoir, "On the Move," was published in April.

**JOHN MCPHEE** ("OMISSION," P. 42), a staff writer since 1965, has published twenty-eight books, including "Silk Parachute."

**HESTER KNIBBE** (POEM, P. 46) is a Dutch poet. "Hungerpots," a collection of her poems in English, will be out in October.

**PATRICK RADDEN KEEFE** ("THE WORST OF THE WORST," P. 62), a staff writer, is a senior fellow at the Century Foundation.

**JOY WILLIAMS** (FICTION, P. 76) has published four novels and five books of stories, including "The Visiting Privilege: New and Collected Stories."

**KELEFA SANNEH** (A CRITIC AT LARGE, P. 80) is a staff writer.

**BARRY BLITT** (COVER) illustrated the children's book "The Founding Fathers!: Those Horse-Ridin', Fiddle-Playin', Book-Readin', Gun-Totin' Gentlemen Who Started America," which came out in January.

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**VIDEO:** Tens of thousands of feral and stray cats roam the streets of New York. A short documentary on what's being done to manage the city's feline population.

**PODCASTS:** On the Political Scene, *John Cassidy* and *James Surowiecki* talk with *Dorothy Wickenden* about the current and future state of the economy. Plus, on Out Loud, *Sarah Larson* and *Andrew Marantz* join *Amelia Lester* and *David Haglund* in a discussion of self-help and podcasts.

**SLIDE SHOW:** A comparison of ancient Roman hair styles and the coifs of the 2016 Presidential candidates.

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# THE MAIL

## THE SHOTS

What is striking to me about Jake Halpern's Profile of Darren Wilson is that the killing of Michael Brown, an unarmed teen-ager, by a cop who fired ten shots into the street, is somehow considered by the Ferguson Police Department, the St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney, and the Justice Department to be regrettable yet unpunishable ("The Cop," August 10th & 17th). My late father, a tough law-enforcement officer on the piers in New York City, shot one person in his more than fifty years of service: an armed robber whom he hit in the leg during a running gun fight. By training and by temperament, he told me, he never drew his gun unless he intended to shoot. Violence, sometimes even as he fought for his life, was not an unusual part of his work. He had an array of appropriate responses to situations in which he felt threatened. He disarmed people, deployed judo come-along holds, and used his fists. When he got angry he was terrifying, but he also taught me about social justice. Darren Wilson got scared and he started shooting. That's not what well-trained cops do.

Roy Morrison  
Newton, Mass.

## WEIGHT OF THE WORDS

I appreciated Kelefa Sanneh's fair and skeptical assessment of the two latest books charging liberals with attacking free speech through politically correct forms of social pressure ("The Hell You Say," August 10th & 17th). But speech policing is not only a liberal problem. One could argue that the entire Republican Party has become a restricted zone for any discussion of climate change, family-planning choices, or raising taxes. More meaningfully, legal restrictions on speech remain entirely within the purview of conservatives. For example, in Florida, under the governorship of Rick Scott, doctors have been prohibited from ask-

ing patients whether they own guns—despite the well-documented health and safety risks associated with gun ownership. Scott also tried to prohibit workers at county health centers from discussing the Affordable Care Act with patients. Twenty-one states have versions of laws making it illegal for workers at state-funded health centers to provide abortion services, or even counsel women about them. While speech-shaming of the sort documented by Mary Katharine Ham, Guy Benson, and Kirsten Powers may be silly in many cases, the small squabbles on liberal college campuses aren't nearly as pernicious as the gag rules imposed by conservatives.

Steven Conn  
W. E. Smith Professor of History  
Miami University  
Oxford, Ohio

Sanneh elegantly explains how college liberals clash with free-speech hawks over what kinds of speech deserve protection. Speech signals which behaviors are acceptable. When, as the article mentions, a student protested a song that did not "create a safe space," she was being literal. Government attempts to alter behavior through speech restrictions tend to be ineffective—in France, laws against anti-Semitic speech have hardly prevented spikes in anti-Semitic threats and violence. Instead, communities would be better off engaging in meaningful dialogue about how words lead to harmful behaviors and shunning individuals who persist in spewing hate speech. The government may allow you to slyly promote malice, but that does not mean that your neighbors will.

Jacqueline Drayer  
Clearwater, Fla.

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to [themail@newyorker.com](mailto:themail@newyorker.com). Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. We regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter or return letters.

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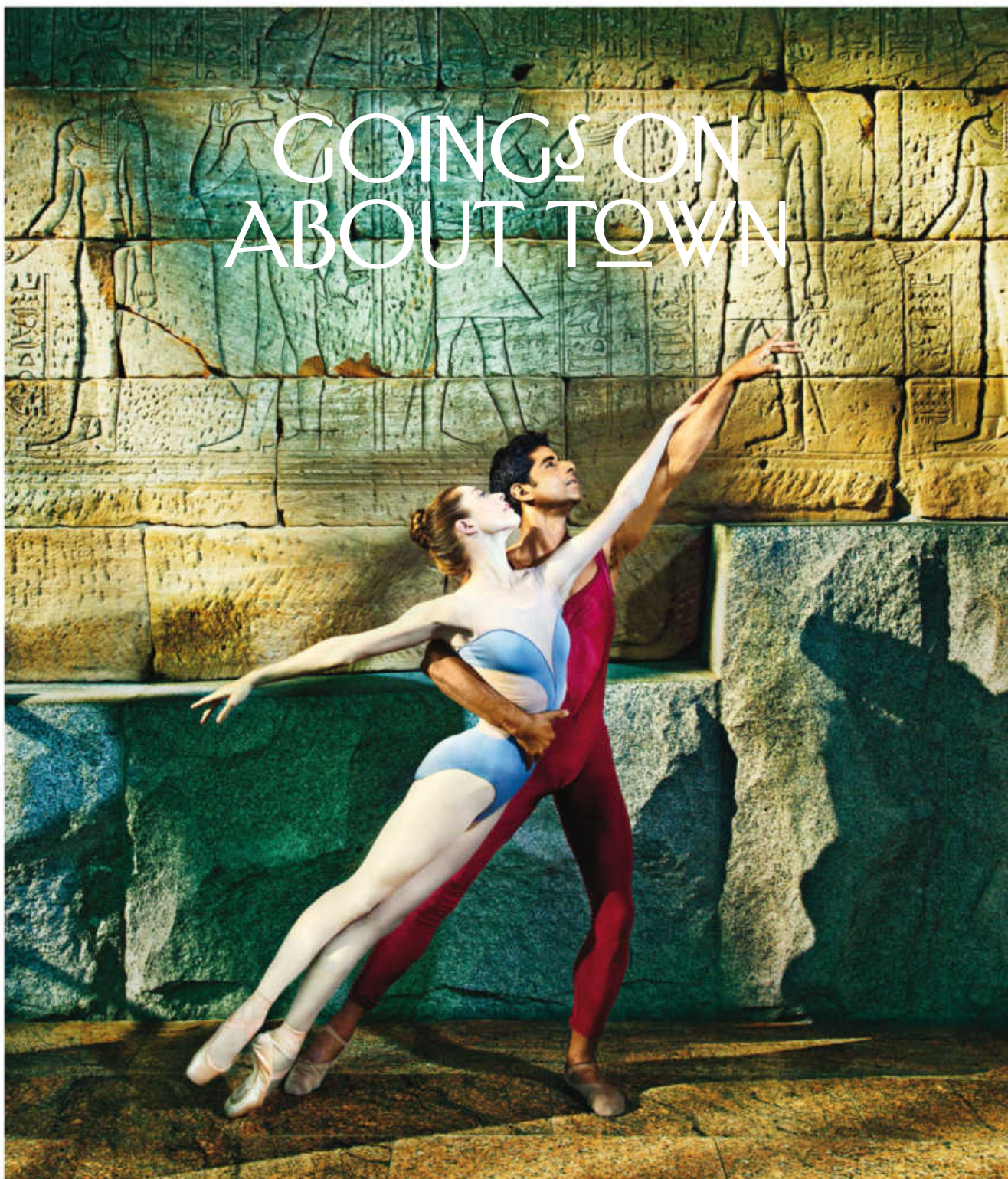
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# GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



SEPTEMBER 2015    WEDNESDAY 9TH    THURSDAY 10TH    FRIDAY 11TH    SATURDAY 12TH    SUNDAY 13TH    MONDAY 14TH    TUESDAY 15TH

**AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME** that Steve Reich and Philip Glass were laying the foundation for American minimalism by studying African and Asian music, the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt was delving into the mysteries of medieval European music and coming up with something equally fresh. The results of that inquiry—works of profound melancholy, yet teeming with life—have enthralled the world. The Metropolitan Museum opens its performance season on Sept. 11 at the Temple of Dendur with an eightieth-birthday tribute to the composer that features members of the New Juilliard Ensemble as well as the New York City Ballet principal dancers Amar Ramasar and Rebecca Krohn, who will physicalize the hard-won serenity of Pärt's "Fratres," in choreography by Christopher Wheeldon ("Liturgy").

NIGHT LIFE  
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PHOTOGRAPH BY PARI DUKOVIC





The festival includes the Norwegian singer Jenny Hval and the electronic act the Haxan Cloak.

## INTO THE WOODS

*Basilica SoundScape returns to the Hudson Valley.*

FOR A CERTAIN SUBSET of New York artists and intellectuals, whose interests and wardrobes slant toward the obsidian, Brandon Stosuy is a sovereign figure. As a curator, he's got a rare ability to create modish currency from the inaccessible; gloomy genres like harsh noise, power electronics, and black metal were not considered au courant until quite recently, and Stosuy invested early, booking shows in his native New Jersey before becoming the managing editor at *Pitchfork*. He's programmed acts for MOMA's "Warm Up" series, collaborated with Matthew Barney, and in 2011 was a co-founder of Basilica SoundScape, an expertly curated festival in Hudson, New York, wedging his esoteric tastes in among the farmers' markets and meditation retreats of America's Rhineland.

Stosuy originally envisioned Basilica SoundScape as an antidote to the big-tent affairs held yearly in Coachella Valley and Austin. It boasts no corporate sponsors, and lasts just three days, Sept. 11-13 this year, in a gorgeous brick foundry near Hudson's South Bay riverfront. "Our space can fit twelve hundred people—maybe thirteen if you really push it," he told me. The two-hour drive from Manhattan limits the attendees to motivated adventurous listeners, and the relatively small size allows the festival to take chances with little-known artists and nonmusical events. (This year features a suite of new large-scale paintings by Dan Colen and readings from the rafters by the poets Dorothea Lasky, Ariana Reines, and Sarah Jean Alexander.)

The music selection is, of course, excellent, with Stosuy's harsher tendencies softened by his booking partner, Brian DeRan. "Brian and I have similar tastes," Stosuy said, "but he's more into hippie West Coast psychedelia. I'm more into the darker stuff." Stosuy has scheduled a hotly anticipated performance from the experimental Norwegian composer and performer Jenny Hval on Sept. 12. Her recent record, "Apocalypse, girl," a collection of self-probing electro-pop, noise, and ambient music, made waves when it was released this summer, on the boutique label Sacred Bones Records. Another act, the Michigan noise trio Wolf Eyes, favors blisteringly loud and astoundingly inaccessible sonic textures. The closer is, for the first time, an electronic act, the producer Bobby Krlic's dark ambient solo project the Haxan Cloak, spotlighting the current vogue for bleak and minimal electronica.

—Benjamin Shapiro

## NIGHT LIFE

### ROCK AND POP

*Musicians and night-club proprietors lead complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.*

#### Albert Cummings

Born into a family of home builders, it was natural for Cummings to follow his father into the profession. But years of wielding a power saw during the day didn't keep him from his passion for the blues. The guitarist and singer teamed up with Double Trouble, the late Stevie Ray Vaughan's rhythm section, for his debut album in 2003, and he's taken off since then, having turned out six albums of full-throttle blues. He's at B. B. King's on Sept. 13 with material from his latest release, "Someone Like You." (237 W. 42nd St. 212-997-4144.)

#### The Milk Carton Kids

This duo from Eagle Rock, California, made up of the singers and guitarists Kenneth Pattengale and Joey Ryan, renders exquisitely melodic folk music that feels both old-timey and timeless. The pair have a virtuosic ability to harmonize with each other, creating a wistful, intimate beauty, and they share a witty sense of humor. The twosome channelled their live energy on their third album, "Monterey," by recording the songs in real time, sans audience, on stages in various concert halls, theatres, and churches across the country. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. Sept. 11.)

#### 90s Fest

This one-day gathering in Williamsburg intends to capitalize on nostalgia for the nineties, to the point where it bills itself as appealing to the "pog-slammin', Baywatchin' Y2K-fearin' lovers of the best decade ever." And it's true that most of the acts participating had their biggest hits in that decade: there's **Naughty by Nature** ("O.P.P.," 1991), **Blind Melon** ("No Rain," 1992), **Lisa Loeb** ("Stay," 1994), **Coolio** ("Gangsta's Paradise," 1995), **Tonic** ("If You Could Only See," 1997), and **Smash Mouth** ("All Star," 1999). Most of those acts were one-hit wonders, or close to it (a few had two: Naughty by Nature's second hit, "Hip Hop Hooray," was gigantic). **Salt-N-Pepa**, the final act in the festival, are a little more distinctive. The Queens duo was already on the charts in the eighties, and produced at least four immortal pop singles: "Push It," "Let's Talk About Sex," "Shoop," and "Whatta Man." Nitpick with fellow nineties obsessives all day long as you relive the past. (50 Kent, 50 Kent Ave. 90sfest.com. Sept. 12.)

#### The Orb

This group, which is often cited as one of the main creators of ambient house music, released "The Orb's Adventures Beyond the Ultraworld," its full-length debut and a sonic odyssey, in 1991. Various changes in lineup have followed since then, and currently the Orb is a duo made up of the co-founder Alex Paterson, from London,





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and the Swiss composer Thomas Fehlmann. In June, they released “Moonbuilding 2703 AD,” a work that consists of only four tracks but clocks in at more than fifty minutes. The album sets a cosmic mood, with hypnotic beats, vaporous synths, and mysterious cloudbursts of noise; it could be the perfect soundtrack for a trip to the outer edges of the solar system (or one’s consciousness). (Sept. 10: Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. 718-486-5400. Sept. 11: Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. 212-533-2111.)

#### Laetitia Sadier

Best known as the primary vocalist and lyricist for the electronic art-pop band Stereolab, the French-born Sadier has a smooth voice that lends itself to many musical genres. At times, she sounds deadly serious, at others playful, sometimes otherworldly and sometimes very present. Her dynamic album “Something Shines” (which came out on Drag City last year) is her third and most recent solo

release. Full of highly nuanced songs, it seamlessly blends electronic, rock, and lounge styles. This is her first U.S. show in three years. (Baby’s All Right, 146 Broadway, Brooklyn. 718-599-5800. Sept. 11.)

#### Chelsea Wolfe

This thirty-one-year-old singer-songwriter has long suffered from sleep paralysis, a condition that renders her unable to move or speak upon waking, encouraging the feeling that she’s woken up dead. This experience shows up in her gloomy songs, which tend to be corrosive, goth-pop downers, often focussing on sleep. Her newest album, “Abyss,” is her heaviest to date, but still finds Wolfe struggling to escape the dark (“Lost and alone in confusion,” she moans toward the end of the record. “I’m screaming, but I can’t wake up.”) Those in the audience probably won’t have the same problem; Wolfe’s live show is staggeringly loud, and she counts many long-haired metalheads among her fans, including Sunn O)))’s

guitarist, Stephen O’Malley. (Music Hall of Williamsburg, 66 N. 6th St., Brooklyn. 718-486-5400. Sept. 9.)

### JAZZ AND STANDARDS

#### “The Book Beriah”

With the world premiere of “Masada Book Three—The Book Beriah,” the saxophonist and composer **John Zorn** continues to expand the concept of Jewish music. His “Masada” project now numbers six hundred and thirteen songs. A typically eclectic consortium of ensembles (including the Brazilian percussionist **Cyro Baptista’s Banquet of Spirits**; the avant-rock band **Cleric**; the neoklezmer trio **Nigunim**, with **Frank London** and **Uri Caine**; and **Zion 80**, which combines Jewish and Afrobeat music) will introduce the new pieces. (Roulette, 509 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn. 917-267-0363. Sept. 10.)

#### Bill Charlap Trio

The premier mainstream piano trio of its day hasn’t released a new re-

cording in some time, but the suave interplay between its leader and his longtime partners—the unrelated **Kenny Washington** on drums and **Peter Washington** on bass—is always a pleasure to hear. A connoisseur of American song, Charlap finds unique beauty in the work of such masters as Gershwin, Sondheim, Bernstein, and Carmichael. (Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. 212-255-4037. Sept. 8-13 and Sept. 15-20.)

#### George Mraz

One of the secret heroes of the jazz scene for the past five decades, the bassist Mraz is the kind of supremely adept and consistently inspired player whose presence virtually insures onstage creativity. To celebrate his seventy-first birthday, the Czech-born virtuoso takes the helm of a trio featuring his wife, the pianist **Camilla Mraz**, and the drummer **Anthony Pinciotti**. (Jazz at Kitano, 66 Park Ave., at 38th St. 212-885-7119. Sept. 12.)

locations and features, among others, the composer-vocalists Du Yun and Kate Soper. (129 W. 67th St. Sept. 9 at 7:30. For a complete schedule, visit [resonantbodiesfestival.org](http://resonantbodiesfestival.org).)

#### Israeli Chamber Project: “Fairy Tales”

This collective of outstanding instrumentalists, both young and seasoned, is a regular guest at Merkin Concert Hall. Its season-opening program (featuring the superb harpist Sivan Magen) offers music by Schumann (“Fairy Tales,” Op. 132) and Dvořák (the Piano Quartet No. 2 in E-Flat Major) as well as works by Henriette Renié and the young Israeli composer Gilad Hochman. (129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Sept. 10 at 7:30.)

#### American Classical Orchestra

Thomas Crawford’s admired ensemble, which gives historically informed performances on period instruments, offers its season-opening concert, a program of all middle-period Beethoven: the Piano Concerto No. 5, “Emperor” (with the exciting young soloist Jiayan Sun, who will perform on a reproduction of a pianoforte built in 1812 by the Viennese master Johann Fritz), the Symphony No. 7 in A Major, and the “Leonore” Overture No. 3. (Alice Tully Hall. lincolncenter.org. Sept. 10 at 8.)

#### “Sacred Music in a Sacred Space”: The Choir of Trinity College, Cambridge

The renowned choristers help the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola kick off this season’s series with an expertly delivered sampling of the typical choral diet, from the Renaissance mainstays Tallis and Byrd to such contemporary figures as Arvo Pärt, John Tavener, and the Grammy winner

Eric Whitacre. Also on the program are bracing works for organ by Bach and Duruflé. (980 Park Ave., at 84th St. 212-288-2520. Sept. 11 at 7.)

#### Five Boroughs Music Festival: American Contemporary Music Ensemble

ACME, as it’s known by its fans, begins the enterprising series’ season with a concert that not only features fresh pieces by its members (including the composer-pianist Timo Andres and the composer-violinists Caleb Burhans and Caroline Shaw) but also an American classic (Charles Ives’s Piano Trio) and a Meredith Monk rarity (her string quartet, “Stringsongs”). The group also bands together for “5×5,” a multi-movement work by its five members. (National Opera Center, 330 Seventh Ave. 5bmf.org. Sept. 11 at 7.)

#### Austrian Cultural Forum: Moving Sounds Festival

A newly minted string quartet, the Rhythm Method, initiates the sixth annual festival by performing the world premiere of the Brooklyn-based Austrian sound artist Bernd Klug’s “String Quartet and Skyscraper.” The piece is designed to match the specifics of the architect Raymond Abraham’s midtown edifice—Klug refashions the sliver-shaped space as a building-size interactive instrument. The members of the quartet play not only their own instruments but also on the composer’s on-site sound installation, “Traces of [Dis]location,” and on the building itself. (11 E. 52nd St. For a complete schedule of events, see [afcn.org](http://afcn.org). Sept. 11 at 7:30.)

#### Cantata Profana

This young group out of Yale is making a name for itself with

intrepid and unexpected concerts. Its New York season opens with an extraordinarily rare performance of Hans Werner Henze’s “Kammermusik 1958,” a fifty-minute tribute to Benjamin Britten (and, by its title, to an earlier German master, Paul Hindemith) for tenor and chamber ensemble that combines settings of texts by Hölderlin with poignant instrumental interludes. (St. Peter’s Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. [cantataprofana.com](http://cantataprofana.com). Sept. 11-12 at 8.)

### OUT OF TOWN

#### Maverick Concerts

The Maverick’s music chapel in the woods wraps up its hundredth season with a concert given by some old friends: the esteemed American String Quartet and the Bard Conservatory composer George Tsontakis, whose “String Quartet 7.5” will have its world premiere on a program that also features works by Beethoven (the “Razumovsky” Quartet No. 1 in F Major) and Mendelssohn (the jubilant Quartet in D Major, Op. 44, No. 1). (Woodstock, N.Y. [maverickconcerts.org](http://maverickconcerts.org). Sept. 13 at 2.)

#### Music Mountain

Northwest Connecticut’s chamber-music shrine will host a group of distinguished veterans—the pianist Ursula Oppens and the women of the Cassatt String Quartet—in its next concert, a celebration of musical affection. It begins with a solo-piano work by Clara Schumann and concludes with the mighty Piano Quintet by her husband, Robert, with a quartet by their friend Felix Mendelssohn (in A Minor, Op. 13) in between. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. Sept. 13 at 3.)



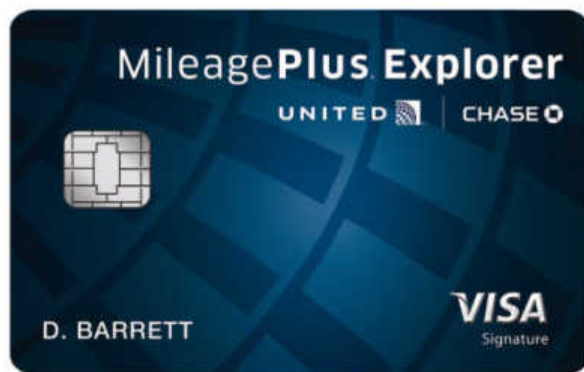
## CLASSICAL MUSIC

### CONCERTS IN TOWN

#### Resonant Bodies Festival at Merkin Concert Hall

The soprano and raconteur Lucy Dhegrae’s third annual festival devoted to new vocal music commences with three indispensable sopranos performing pieces by composers with whom they have long-standing associations. Tony Arnold (with the pianist Jacob Greenberg and other musicians) traces her musical trajectory in works by the iconic Webern, Crumb, and Kurtág, as well as Jason Eckardt, and in a world premiere by Fredrick Gifford. Dawn Upshaw (joined by her stalwart partner, the pianist Gilbert Kalish, and members of Contemporaneous) performs a world premiere by Sheila Silver and a work by Shawn Jaeger. And Lucy Shelton interprets music by a longtime collaborator, Elliott Carter, in addition to pieces by Milton Babbitt and James Yannatos and world premieres by Icli Zitella, Richard Festinger, Eric Nathan, and Susan Botti. For those who thirst for more, the festival runs the subsequent two nights at different





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# THE THEATRE



In "Iphigenia in Aulis," Agamemnon must decide whether to sacrifice his daughter in exchange for favorable winds.

## GET HER TO THE GREEK

*Anne Washburn adapts Euripides at Classic Stage Company.*

SOME PLAYWRIGHTS, NOTABLY ANNIE BAKER, seem to write on the molecular level, building up from pauses, glances, and scraps of dialogue. Others, such as Itamar Moses, are more macro, toying with big ideas and structures and letting drama—or warped comedy—trickle down. The Berkeley-born playwright Anne Washburn does both, concocting extreme scenarios and filling them with keenly observed offhand speech. "10 out of 12," which ran at SoHo Rep this summer, was set at a tech rehearsal for a play, which theatre people know to be excruciatingly boring but which, in Washburn's hands, had an almost ritualistic beauty. Stranger was "Mr. Burns, a Post-Electric Play," a postmodern triptych, which was staged by the Civilians in 2013, at Playwrights Horizons. In the first act, survivors of a near-future apocalypse comfort themselves by recounting the plot of a "Simpsons" episode. In the second, society has begun to rebuild, and a makeshift theatre troupe turns the same episode into a barnyard entertainment. Then we leap seventy-five years forward: that episode has morphed into a full-blown operetta, and Bart, Homer, and company have become the new folkloric heroes, as archetypal as Adam and Eve. Civilization

reboots. The oral tradition perseveres.

Given her flair for the mythic, it's no surprise that Washburn has a taste for Greek tragedy. "Mr. Burns," she has said, was inspired in part by her experience adapting Euripides' "Orestes" for the Folger Theatre, in Washington, D.C., in 2010. Her new version of Euripides' "Iphigenia in Aulis" comes to Classic Stage Company this week, directed by another artist of tireless invention, Rachel Chavkin ("Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812"). The production is the centerpiece of C.S.C.'s Greek Festival, which has already featured evenings of theatrical fragments, teased to fullness by Charles L. Mee, Ellen McLaughlin, and Mac Wellman, and will include post-show "symposia" curated by the Barnard classics scholar Helene Foley. In "Iphigenia," a war-bound Agamemnon must choose whether to sacrifice his daughter to Artemis in exchange for good winds. The play may hinge on ancient concepts like gods and filicide, but at its core is the timeless anguish of making a decision when any outcome would be catastrophic. If the Greeks feel over-the-top to modern audiences, surely no one is more qualified than Washburn to find the incidental in the epic.

—Michael Schulman



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**IPHIGENIA IN AULIS**  
Classic Stage Company

**THE KING AND I**  
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**SOMETHING ROTTEN!**  
St. James

**THE 39 STEPS**  
Union Square Theatre

## OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

### The Christians

In Lucas Hnath's play, directed by Les Waters, the pastor at a mega-church plans to give a sermon that will unsettle his congregation. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

### Desire

An evening of short plays based on the stories of Tennessee Williams, by playwrights including John Guare, Beth Henley, and David Grimm. Michael Wilson directs. In previews. Opens Sept. 10. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

### Fondly, Collette Richland

Elevator Repair Service stages a play by Sibyl Kempson, about a couple who travel to a mysterious hotel through a tiny door in their living room. Previews begin Sept. 11. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-460-5475.)

### Fool for Love

In Sam Shepard's play, directed by Daniel Aukin for Manhattan Theatre Club, Nina Arianda and Sam Rockwell play brawling ex-lovers at a motel in the Mojave Desert. Previews begin Sept. 15. (Samuel J. Friedman, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

### Fulfillment

Ethan McSweeney directs Thomas Bradshaw's play, about a black New York lawyer who suspects that he's been passed over for partnership because of his race. Previews begin Sept. 11. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

### Genet Porno

Yvan Greenberg's erotic melodrama crosses Jean Genet's 1943 novel, "Our Lady of the Flowers," with the video blog of a modern-day porn star. Opens Sept. 9. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

### Isolde

The experimental auteur Richard Maxwell wrote and directs this Theatre for a New Audience production, which recasts the legend of Tristan and Isolde as the story of an actress and the owner of a construction company. In previews. Opens Sept. 10. (Polonsky Shakespeare Center, 262 Ashland Pl., Brooklyn. 866-811-4111.)

### Judy

Max Posner's play, directed by Ken Rus Schmoll and featuring Birgit Huppuch, Deirdre O'Connell, and Danny Wolohan, is about a man whose wife has left him in the winter of 2040. In previews. Opens Sept. 10. (New Ohio, 154 Christopher St. 866-811-4111.)

### Laugh It Up, Stare It Down

Chris Eigeman directs Alan Hruska's play, which follows a couple from their first meeting through old age, with many absurd challenges in

between. Opens Sept. 9. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 866-811-4111.)

### Spring Awakening

Deaf West Theatre revives the 2006 indie-rock musical, by Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater, based on the Frank Wedekind drama of teen-age sexual discovery. Directed by Michael Arden and performed in sign language and spoken English. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 877-250-2929.)

### Ugly Lies the Bone

Mamie Gummer stars in Lindsey Ferrentino's drama, directed by Patricia McGregor, about a burn victim returning home from a military tour in Afghanistan. Previews begin Sept. 10. (Roundabout Underground, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

## NOW PLAYING

### A Delicate Ship

A lopsided love triangle, Anna Ziegler's drama, produced by the Playwrights Realm, spends the night before Christmas with Sarah (Miriam Silverman), a social worker, and Sam (Matt Dellapina), a musician—new lovers drunk on wine, sex, and philosophy. Knocking at the door is the ghost of relationships past: Sarah's pal Nate (Nick Westrate), a depressive third-grade teacher armed with bubbly and Cheez Doodles. A stealthy tragedy disguised as a relationship play, "A Delicate Ship" explores loneliness, memory, and the pull of the past, with the characters often stepping outside the action to comment on it. The director Margot Bordelon and her designers manage shifts in time lucidly, though she sometimes allows the engaging cast to overact. Ziegler is a clever and compassionate writer, but the play feels more methodical and less consequential than it should, as though there's a wilder, darker work roiling below its smooth surface. (Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through Sept. 12.)

### Drop Dead Perfect

In this curacao-spiked pastiche, back for a return engagement, a wealthy matron and her nubile ward live in tropical splendor somewhere in the Florida Keys. Sure, the high-strung Idris (Everett Quinton) pops too many pills, and young Vivien (Jason Edward Cook) dreams of escaping to the Village, but they muddle along companionably until the arrival of a startlingly well-endowed stranger (Jason Cruz). This campy spoof by Erasmus Fenn (one strongly suspects a pseudonym) fuses "The Glass Menagerie," "I Love Lucy," the late works of Bette Davis, and several mambo records. The cross-dressing and bad puns ("Would you like a cock in the tail?") owe much to the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, which was founded by Quinton's late partner, Charles Ludlam. Though the director, Joe Brancato, encourages his cast to take the silliness seriously, the

show only occasionally verges on giddy derangement. (Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 845-786-2873.)

### Our Last Game

Ed Schmidt is a playwright who presses the home-court advantage. He set "The Last Supper" in his own Windsor Terrace kitchen, "My Last Play" in his living room. In "Our Last Game," he again returns to familiar territory: the high-school locker room. (Schmidt coaches the boys' basketball team at Trinity.) Only fifteen audience members can attend each performance, crowding onto narrow benches and gulping bottled water as Schmidt's nameless coach struts and frets and occasionally throws a chair. The spectators become actors, too. Schmidt casts them as young athletes, typically underperforming, whom the coach scolds, prods, and peps. The jargon is semi-incomprehensible, though the arc of the speeches is familiar. But Schmidt effectively involves the audience in the coach's drama. "Do you feel guilty?" a man asked his wife during intermission at a recent show. "We should have tried harder," she said. (Nord Anglia International School, 44 E. 2nd St. ourlastgame.com.)

### Whorl Inside a Loop

The co-writers Sherie Rene Scott and Rattle Scanlan were on the inside looking out. Having spent several months leading theatre workshops in a medium-security prison, they transformed the experience into this play, about a self-absorbed chanteuse (Scott) who runs a similar class for convicted murderers. As co-directed by Scanlan and Michael Mayer, the staging is appropriately minimal and the camaraderie among the actors rich and unforced. The show incorporates monologues written by men in the real-life workshop, and a few of these speeches, particularly one delivered with a deliberate lack of polish by Chris Myers, are standouts. But the play repeats the tired, uncomfortable trope of repurposing the suffering of minorities to help a white protagonist reflect on her life. "Only when I honestly tell my story can I honestly change my story" is the avowed theme. But whose story is really being told? (Second Stage, 305 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

## OUT OF TOWN

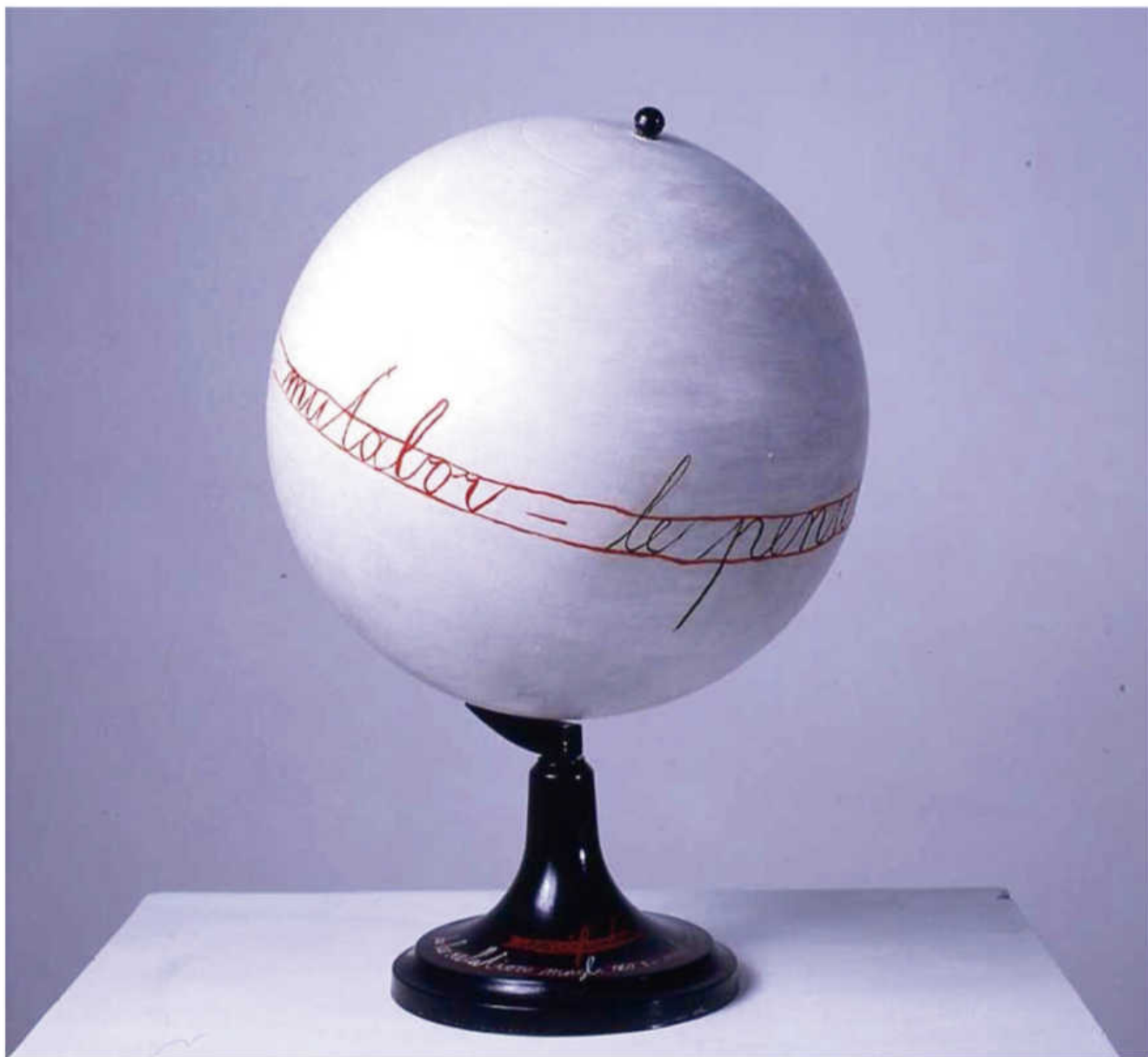
### Red Velvet

Lolita Chakrabarti's play, which had a sumptuous production last spring at St. Ann's Warehouse, follows the boundary-breaking career of Ira Aldridge, the black actor who confounded London audiences when he went on as Othello at Covent Garden, in 1833. Daniela Varon's production, in the Berkshires, stars John Douglas Thompson, who won an Obie for his own portrayal of Othello in 2009. (Shakespeare & Company, 70 Kemble St., Lenox, Mass. 413-637-3353. Through Sept. 13.)

# Transmissions

## Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America 1960–1980

MOMA



Now on view

Support for the exhibition is provided by the MoMA Annual Exhibition Fund.

Mangelos (Dimitrije Bašicevic). *Manifest de la relation*, 1976. Synthetic polymer paint on globe made of plastic and metal. © 2015 Estate of Mangelos (Dimitrije Bašicevic)

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# ART

## MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

### Metropolitan Museum

#### "The Aftermath of Conflict: Jo Ractliffe's Photographs of Angola and South Africa"

Ractliffe's pictures from Angola were taken between 2007 and 2012, several years after the country's civil war had wound down, and there is little trace of that conflict in her landscapes. The images have an odd charge nonetheless, as if the South African photographer had channelled some collective memory. Most of the sites Ractliffe selects are desolate (a field of weeds, a

capsized boat, a graveyard), and the resulting pictures can sometimes feel puzzling. But the pain and trauma are palpable, as are Ractliffe's rigor and restraint: fallow farmlands are riddled with land mines; trash spills down a ravine and into a slum; clothes hang from a dead thorn tree. Through March 6.

### Museum of Modern Art "Take an Object"

The museum's postwar paintings and sculptures have been temporarily replaced by the Picasso sculpture blowout, which opens on Sept. 14.

But this jaunty, single-gallery rehang has more brio, if less refinement, than the average permanent-collection show. The title is borrowed from Jasper Johns's famous dictum—"Take an object. Do something to it. Do something else to it"—and the artist's marriage of object and action abides here, not only in a 1961 painting scarred by Johns's teeth marks but also in Robert Rauschenberg's bald-eagle-draped "combine," Robert Watts's chrome-plated lollipop and pencil, and Katsuhiko Yamaguchi's sacks stretched on iron armatures, which echo Lee Bontecou's wall relief from the same era. The show also mounts a defense of the French Nouveaux Réalistes, too often sidelined in the museum's U.S.-centric narrative of postwar art. Of particular note: Niki de Saint Phalle's bullet-riddled assemblage created for John Cage's 1961 performance at the U.S. Embassy in Paris. Through Feb. 28.

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA "From the Ruins"

This December, world leaders will congregate for yet another

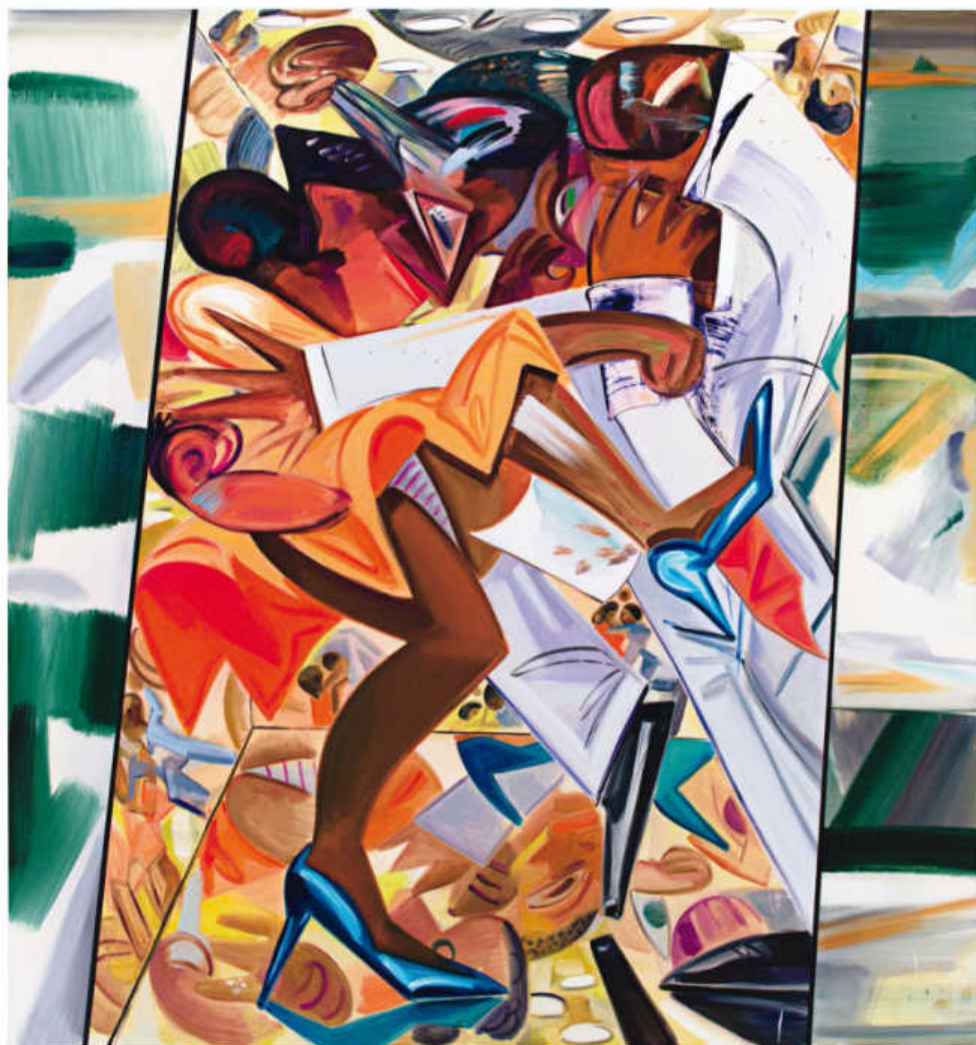
last-ditch climate conference; the artists here have already given up. This stout but relentlessly downbeat show takes a page from Jean-Luc Godard's "Alphaville," picturing a dystopian future through a gaze at the present. High points include LaToya Ruby Frazier's grimly serene photographs of a crumbling home and hospital, Julie Schenkberg's pile of cast-off furniture and doors, and Luther Price's slide projection, in which images of modernist architecture and urban design are obliterated by smears of red and green. Standing at the heart of the show, like a shelter that's been desperately cobbled together, is Abigail DeVille's "Haarlem Tower of Babel," among whose branches and debris lie remnants of a lost world: a checkerboard, a granny cart, a Donna Summer record. Through Sept. 19. (601Artspace, 601 W. 26th St. 212-243-2735.)

## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN Aaron Flint Jamison

This stumper of a show starts on the street: the door is locked, and it may take a few seconds of struggle before you trip the motion detector that opens it. Inside, you'll find no artist's name, no description, no gallery attendant—just a suspended sculpture. It's an enigmatic, geometric totem, one half made of blond cedar, the other half an alluring purple hardwood. Downstairs, things get more abstruse. The same woods combine with black tubes in an assemblage that's connected to a thermoregulator; there's also a black box with a light source inside. Unseen attendants leave sheets of paper inside it each night to bake, no doubt to the chagrin of the gallery's insurers. Obscurity is no vice in the service of something greater, but Jamison might ask if it's a worthy goal in itself. Through Sept. 20. (Abreu, 36 Orchard St. 212-995-1774.)

## GALLERIES—BROOKLYN Lynn Saville

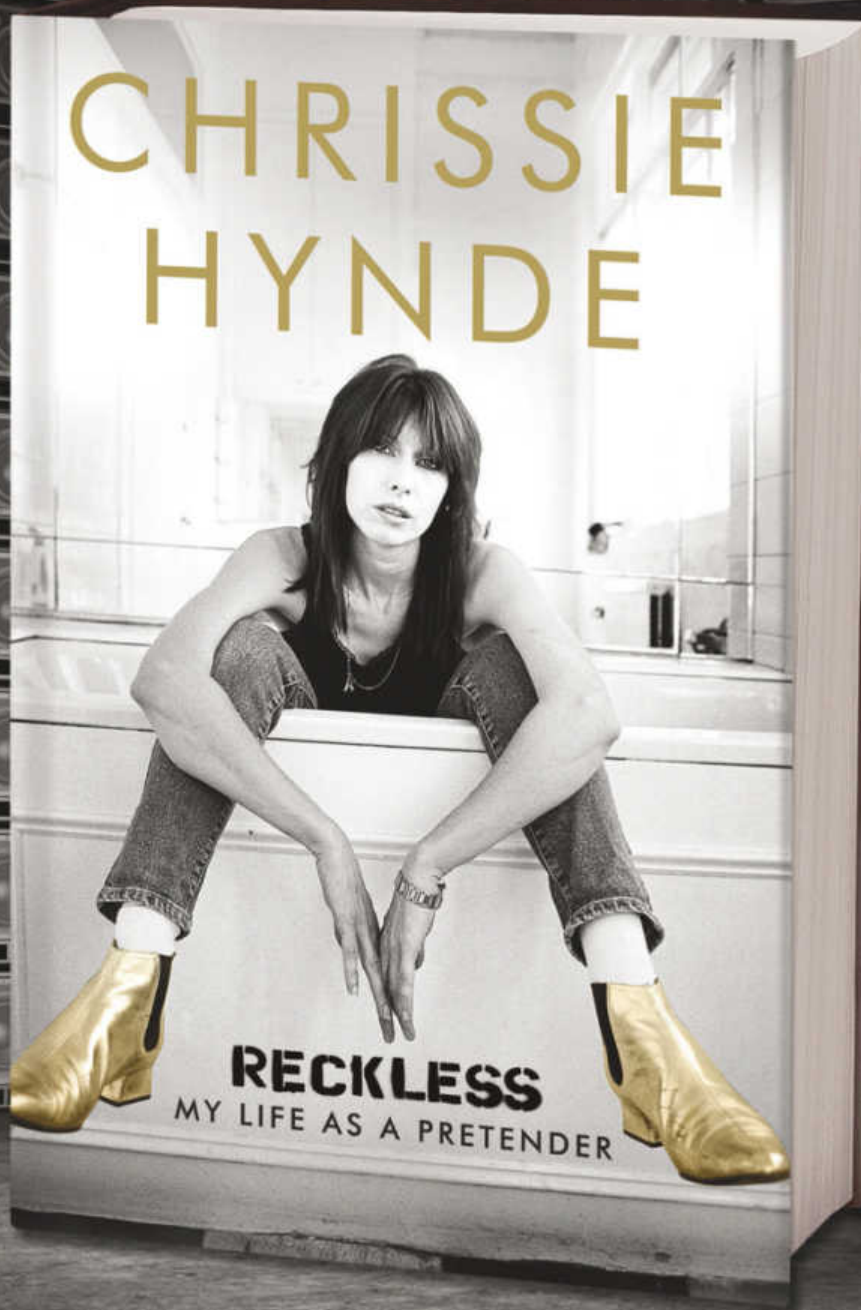
There's a long, rich history of New York photographers working at night, from Berenice Abbott to Joel Meyerowitz. Saville joins their ranks with these pictures of the Manhattan skyline, seen from Long Island City through the scrim of the Pepsi-Cola sign, and of a floodlit Rockefeller Center, looking eerily pale. She's also drawn to abandoned spaces on the city's margins, where the tone shifts from mystery to near-menace. Although her black-and-white works from the late nineties have an appealingly classic bent, Saville is at her subtle best when working in color—an image of brightly painted storefront gates suggest color-field canvases. Through Oct. 2. (Pratt Institute Photography Gallery, 200 Willoughby Ave. 718-687-5639.)



Dana Schutz, one of the most exciting painters working in New York, opens her second show at the Petzel gallery, in Chelsea, on Sept. 10. It includes the riotous, eight-foot-tall canvas "Fight in an Elevator" (above).



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Montgomery Clift and Jennifer Jones play lovers on the verge of a breakup in the melodrama "Terminal Station."



## MOVIES

a predatory landlord summons his private army to displace its residents, Totò miraculously obtains the power of wish fulfillment, which his desperate neighbors quickly abuse. The satire on the base cravings of rich and poor alike is also a cry of despair; De Sica's celestial visions suggest that nothing short of a miracle will save those in need.

The Hollywood luminaries Jennifer Jones and Montgomery Clift star in De Sica's 1953 English-language drama, "Terminal Station" (Sept. 30), for which Truman Capote wrote the dialogue. Jones plays Mary Forbes, a married American woman who breaks off an affair she began while visiting Rome, with Giovanni Doria (Clift), a local professor. As Mary is leaving, Giovanni finds her at the train station and tries to persuade her to stay with him. Their tense wrangling is the core of the film; De Sica gets furious, galvanic performances from Jones and Clift and captures them in closeups of a screen-piercing immediacy. Yet, yielding to habit, De Sica also embeds the lovers in a web of picturesque incidents that are mere distractions from the operatic passion of their romantic crisis.

—Richard Brody

## TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES

*Vittorio De Sica's reality-based movies present dramas of love and money in postwar Italy.*

**IF VITTORIO DE SICA HAD DIRECTED** only one movie, the 1948 drama "Bicycle Thieves," his name would still be enshrined in the history of cinema. That film—screening Sept. 16-19 in Film Forum's monthlong De Sica retrospective (Sept. 9-Oct. 8)—is perhaps the quintessential work of Italian neorealism, and it displays the movement's glories as well as its limitations. It's the story of Antonio Ricci (Lamberto Maggiorani), an unemployed man in Rome who is hired as a poster hanger, contingent on his owning a bicycle. During his first day on the job, his bicycle is stolen, and he frantically searches the city for it, accompanied by his young son, Bruno (Enzo Staiola).

Revealing the catastrophic impact of seemingly minor events on people who are struggling to subsist, De Sica endows slender side business and incidental pictorial details with high suspense and tragic grandeur. With a keen succession of tracking shots amid crowds at a market and a church, he transforms the sheer scale of the city and the vast number of residents in similarly desperate straits into a symphonic lament for the human condition.

But the plethora of incidents, together with the constraining embrace of De Sica's sympathies, reduce the film to its plot and truncate the characters' inner lives. Nonetheless, the actors lend the characters vibrant identities far beyond those sketched in the script. De Sica was originally an actor, and his films, even when starring nonprofessionals such as Maggiorani and Staiola, are feasts of performance.

De Sica let his imagination run wild in the 1951 political comedy "Miracle in Milan" (Sept. 18-19, Sept. 22-23, and Sept. 25-26), a fantasy that's filled with astonishing special effects and slapstick stunts. Its Chaplinesque star, Francesco Golisano—a superbly subtle physical comedian and another nonprofessional—plays Totò, a penniless orphan in a shantytown on the outskirts of the city. When

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#### OPENING BREATHE

Mélanie Laurent directed this drama, about two teen-agers (Joséphine Japy and Lou de Laâge) whose friendship devolves into hatred. In French. Opening Sept. 11. (In limited release.)

#### COMING HOME

Zhang Yimou directed this historical drama, about a married couple forcibly separated by the Chinese government during the Cultural Revolution. Starring Gong Li and Chen Daoming. In Mandarin. Opening Sept. 9. (In limited release.)

#### GOODNIGHT MOMMY

In this horror film, two children reconnect with their mother and find her changed by plastic surgery. Directed by Severin Fiala and Veronika Franz. Opening Sept. 11. (In limited release.)

#### THE PERFECT GUY

A thriller, starring Sanaa Lathan as a businesswoman who is threatened by a jealous lover (Michael Ealy). Directed by David M. Rosenthal; co-starring Morris Chestnut. Opening Sept. 11. (In wide release.)

#### SLEEPING WITH OTHER PEOPLE

A romantic comedy, written and directed by Leslye Headland, about two longtime friends and recovering sex addicts (Jason Sudeikis and Alison Brie) who fall in love. Co-starring Amanda Peet and Adam Scott. Opening Sept. 11. (In limited release.)

#### TIME OUT OF MIND

Reviewed in Now Playing. Opening Sept. 9. (In limited release.)

#### THE VISIT

M. Night Shyamalan directed this horror film, about grandchildren who are terrorized by their grandparents. Starring Kathryn Hahn, Olivia DeJonge, Ed Oxenbould, and Deanna Dunagan. Opening Sept. 11. (In wide release.)



#### MOVIE OF THE WEEK

A video discussion of Frank Borzage's "Man's Castle," from 1933, in our digital edition and online.

#### NOW PLAYING

##### The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution

This new documentary, directed by Stanley Nelson, will be a useful primer for anyone unschooled in the story of the Black Panthers, although their look, their impact, and their raison d'être remain lodged with surprising tenacity in the public mind. We hear of the birth of the movement in Oakland, California, and of the speed with which its militant message spread to the North, in contrast to the more equitable, church-grounded toil for civil rights in the Southern states. We are presented with the leading players, including Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver, and with the disputes that would, later on, so bitterly divide them. (At the F.B.I., as the film shows, J. Edgar Hoover, who viewed the Panthers as a menace to society, noted this dissent with satisfaction and let them tear each other apart.) The movie is hardly the most objective of accounts, but fieriness is part of its appeal, stoked by the songs on the soundtrack and sustained by a belief that the grievances aired at the time remain unresolved.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 9/7/15.) (In limited release.)

##### Heaven Knows What

The directors Josh and Benny Safdie display the destructive power of heroin—the effects of the drug itself and the desperate efforts to get it—in this furious drama of young addicts surviving on the streets of the Upper West Side. The filmmakers add an element that turns the drug all the more toxic: love. Harley (Arielle Holmes) is fanatically devoted to Ilya (Caleb Landry Jones) despite his brutal indifference to her suicidal threats. She makes an attempt and recovers in a psychiatric hospital; upon her release, she takes up with Mike (Buddy Duress), a low-level dealer who provokes Ilya's violent jealousy. The script, by Josh Safdie and Ronald Bronstein, is based on Holmes's memoir; it's filled with astonishing details of addicts' practical agonies—the struggle for shelter and a place to shoot up, the habits of theft and begging, the emptiness of near-feral subsistence. Aided by Sean Price Williams's telephoto images, the Safdies pierce the façades of familiar places to discover terrifying new realms of feeling.—*Richard Brody* (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Sept. 9.)

##### Little Caesar

Edward G. Robinson stars in this 1931 crime drama, as Caesar Enrico Bandello, a small-time hood who dreams of the big time and crashes the Chicago rackets, gleefully capturing the tough-talking mobster's vulgar preening and sneering pugnacity. Meanwhile, Mervyn LeRoy's coldly efficient direction—due less to his own artistry than to the constraints

of sound recording in its first years—imposes a static rigor on the action and lends the actor's diction and gestures a sculptural, granitic force. The terse, epigrammatic narrative offers every hardboiled cliché in its naïve, original form, including the gangster who falls in love and wants to go straight (Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.), the sarcastic Irish police officer (Thomas Jackson), the prodigal gangland banquet, and the operatic death throes. The psychosexual subtexts of later gangster movies are there, too, as when Little Caesar draws his slight, furtive cohort Otero (George E. Stone) onto his bed for a meaningful tête-à-tête.—*R.B.* (MOMA; Sept. 9.)

##### Mistress America

Noah Baumbach's movie is about Tracy (Lola Kirke), a freshman at Barnard, and her fragile friendship with Brooke (Greta Gerwig), twelve years her senior. They are linked though not yet related, since Tracy's mother is betrothed to Brooke's father. Brooke does a heap of things, none of which endure; she runs an exercise class, she plans to open a restaurant, and her eagerness both captivates and vexes the younger woman, who seems wiser and more guarded, and who doesn't scruple to write a story based on the figure of Brooke, much to the latter's distress. Baumbach knows how the lunges of action, in pursuit of love or money, can veer toward a kind of madness, yet he also displays great coolness and care throughout the second half of the film, as he stages an elaborate set piece inside a fancy house in Connecticut—introducing one fresh character after another, without cluttering the frame or letting the energy drop. That is why some of the sharpest contributions come from supporting players: Michael Chernus, as Brooke's former beau, now chunky and rich; Matthew Shear, as a classmate of Tracy's; and Jasmine Cephas Jones, as his seething girlfriend.—*A.L.* (8/24/15) (In limited release.)

##### The Panic in Needle Park

Al Pacino and Kitty Winn star in Jerry Schatzberg's 1971 drama, as a pair of drug addicts drifting through Manhattan's horror holes in a state of mutual self-destruction. The overheated Bobby, a crook since childhood, is a bundle of jitters and motormouthed sass from the city streets. He cools down on the heroin that his girlfriend, Helen, a torpid artist from Indiana, uses to thaw her emotional core (frozen solid by an illegal abortion). The city seems rotted by the schemes of hustlers in need of a fix and by the law's corrupting force (embodied by Alan Vint, as a soft-spoken, hard-nosed detective). Schatzberg doesn't romanticize addicts' troubles; with a tender but unsparing eye, he spins visual variations on shambling degradation and transient relief.

His tremulous palette of briskly panning telephoto shots unfolds a city within a city, a second world of experience that shows through New York's abraded surfaces. The sudden lurch of moods, ranging from bad to worse, is the movie's very subject.—*R.B.* (Film Society of Lincoln Center; Sept. 9.)

##### Queen of Earth

Alex Ross Perry wrote and directed this claustrophobic tale of two women. Elisabeth Moss, who weeps in the opening shot and laughs in the final frame, dominates the action as Catherine—either a soul in torment or a spoiled rich girl, depending on your point of view. She has recently lost her father, who was an artist in New York. She has also been dumped by her boyfriend, James (Kentucker Audley), and has come to lick her wounds at a lakeside retreat in the company of Virginia (Katherine Waterston), who is described as her best friend, although that's hard to believe. They bicker, freeze each other out, and fight for mastery; never do they feel at ease, and the rest of the movie takes its cue from their distress. A party assumes the air of a witch hunt, with Catherine left crawling from the room; a boat ride finds her clinging to the thwart in a life jacket while Virginia and a neighbor (Patrick Fugit) paddle cheerfully along. The film owes plenty to Bergman, not least in its remorseless closeups, but even Perry's admirers may find the result too brittle and neurasthenic for its own good. The mischievous comedy that brightened his previous work, "Listen Up Philip," is dangerously absent.—*A.L.* (9/7/15) (In limited release.)

##### The Second Mother

In this carefully observed but schematic drama, the housekeeper in a prosperous São Paulo household, Val (Regina Casé), is the stereotypical rock of the family. She provides warmth and stability amid the neurotic egotism of her employers, Bárbara (Karine Teles), a TV personality, and her husband, Carlos (Lourenço Mutarelli), a former artist who spends most of his time in bed. They're both too distracted to pay much attention to their spoiled teen-age son, Fabinho (Michel Joelsas), who is virtually raised by Val. But when Jessica (Camila Márdina), Val's ambitious, audacious, and intellectual daughter, arrives from a rural province to take a college entrance exam, Val's employers welcome her as a guest. Quickly, Jessica overturns the well-to-do family's routines and pierces its façade of contentment. The writer and director, Anna Muylaert, lets Casé ham it up as Val, who bustles about the house in a tumult of emotionalism without any hidden impulses or desires to fuel it; the characters' pigeonholed social roles

display Muylaert's intentions from the start and render the drama superfluous. In Portuguese.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### 7 Chinese Brothers

The quiet, dour whimsy of the director Bob Byington's world meshes almost too perfectly with the fanciful performance of Jason Schwartzman, who shines in this comedy about money and love. Schwartzman plays Larry, who's stuck in a round of low-paying jobs. Fired from one, he gets another, at an automotive shop that's graced with a boss, Lupe (Eleanor Pienta), whom he not so secretly loves. Larry spends most of his free time at home with his stolid pug, Arrow (Schwartzman's own dog), and a little of it at a nursing home, visiting his grandmother (Olympia Dukakis), who dispenses bitter wisdom and tough love, and Major Norwood (Tunde Adebimpe), an orderly who is his friend, pill dealer, and rival in love. Schwartzman brings sardonic swing to Larry's anomie but, over all, this feast of performance is served in very small dishes. Byington's spare visual and narrative style, though authentic, sacrifices the story's deeper echoes, and much of the sweetness is artificial. But the sharpest moments cast mundane struggles in a nearly spiritual light.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### Straight Outta Compton

This bio-pic, about the rise, breakup, and legacy of the Los Angeles hip-hop group N.W.A., gets beyond the surface of fame to reveal the machinations that brought the ensemble together in the nineteen-eighties, and soon drove it apart. The movie also highlights, with justified outrage, the abuses inflicted by the police against black people—and, in particular, on N.W.A.'s members—that gave rise to the famous song "Fuck tha Police." The director, F. Gary Gray, emphasizes the hit's importance by filming a performance of it in Detroit as a bravura showpiece. The cast—headed by Corey Hawkins, as the musical mastermind Dr. Dre; O'Shea Jackson, Jr., as the ingenious lyricist Ice Cube (who is also Jackson's real-life father); and Jason Mitchell, as Eazy-E, the entrepreneurial drug dealer who financed the group's record label and starred on its first hit—maintains an energized, conversational rapidity. But the personal lives of the musicians are mere backdrop. The core of the story is business, the object is power, and the quirks of desire and twists of the unconscious are given no place in the struggle—which the movie sharply carries ahead to the present day.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

### Time Out of Mind

Despite Richard Gere's fiercely committed performance as George Hammond, a formerly prosperous and now homeless man scraping by in New York's streets and shelters, this drama is less than the sum of its parts. The writer and director, Oren Moverman, builds the film around George's daily agonies—the lack of a decent place to sleep, the violence and mockery of gawkers, bureaucratic tangles, trouble with hygiene, the need for food—and his personal demons, including alcohol, grief, and broken family ties. But Moverman's strained effort to squeeze George's activities into a series of plotlines is matched by an arch and portentous visual style. Filming through doors and windows with off-balance framings and eerie reflections, the director suggests a world and a life out of whack. Subsisting in public spaces, George endures both a lack of privacy and oppressive solitude, yet glimmers of friendship between George and a former jazz musician, Dixon Turner (Ben Vereen), veer uneasily between "Odd Couple" comedy and overwrought melodrama. The filmmaker's good intentions and great ambitions aren't matched by their realization. With Jena Malone,

as George's daughter.—*R.B.* (In limited release.)

### Van Gogh

Maurice Pialat's intense, bleak re-creation of the painter's last days begins with his arrival in Auvers to consult the physician Dr. Gachet. Troubled by fits and recovering from his self-mutilation at Arles, van Gogh returns to work invigorated by the new friendship and entranced by Gachet's daughter, Marguerite (Alexandra London), a free spirit whose devotion to the erratic artist tests her father's liberal principles. As embodied by the rock singer turned actor Jacques Dutronc, van Gogh is good-humored, ironic, troubled, and bristling with attitude. He depends on his brother Theo, an art dealer who doesn't believe in Vincent's art; and he ardently pursues sex, drink, and excitement, despite his fragile constitution. Pialat fills the film with iconic Impressionist amusements (dances at riverside cafés, girls at the piano, rowers in straw hats) as well as with the painter's rugged pleasures, including his wild outburst of drunken joy at a Montmartre dance hall, which plays like the celestial flare of a dying star. Released in 1991. In French.—*R.B.* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas; Sept. 13-14.)



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# DANCE

## Louise Lecavalier

In the nineteen-eighties and nineties, Lecavalier was the wild child of Canadian contemporary dance, the star of La La La Human Steps. Now fifty-six, she is still dancing uninhibitedly and with alarming energy, but she is also presenting her first extended effort in choreography. "So Blue" is like a lot of first novels, stuffed to shapelessness with everything the author knows. Eventually, she shares the stage with another dancer, Frédéric Tavernini, but the fascination of the work lies mainly in watching one driven woman in a tracksuit go, go, go. (New York Live Arts, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Sept. 9-12.)

## Sonia Olla Flamenco Dance Company

An on-the-rise Spanish flamenco dancer of impressive intensity, Olla offers two programs with live music. "Tablao Sevilla," the more informal show, which reproduces the improvised format of traditional flamenco clubs, bookends (on Sept. 9 and Sept. 13) the more theatrical "Por los Caminos," which surveys flamenco's borrowings from Latin-American and Middle Eastern culture. (Theatre at the

14th Street Y, 344 E. 14th St. 212-780-0800. Sept. 9 and Sept. 11-13.)

## DANCENOW Joe's Pub Festival

On the occasion of its twentieth season, the cabaret-style festival treats itself to a retrospective. Each night is hosted by a team (Larry Keigwin and Nicole Wolcott do the honors on Sept. 11) and features short works or excerpts by ten performers, all from New York, representing fifty choreographers over the course of five nights. Participants include Mark Dendy Projects, Azure Barton & Artists, the Bang Group, and Gus Solomons, Jr., among many more. (425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Sept. 9-12 and Sept. 24.)

## Jeanine Durning

"Nonstopping" is what Durning calls her current practice, a simple idea with the potential for philosophical revelation and theatrical disaster. In her engrossing 2010 solo "inging" (which will be reprised at the Chocolate Factory Sept. 23-26), it was her unscripted, stream-of-consciousness speech that did not stop. In her new piece "To Being," it is physical motion that is unceasing, and this time she is not alone. Her enactment of a continuous present must share space with Molly

Poerstel and Julian Barnett, who don't stop either. (The Chocolate Factory, 5-49 49th Ave., Long Island City. 866-811-4111. Sept. 9-12. Through Sept. 26.)

## Koosil-ja / "I Am Capitalism"

This show is the latest chapter in the conceptualist choreographer's exploration of the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, specifically the French philosophers' writings on the concurrently attractive and repulsive power of capitalism. Koosil-ja translates these ideas into what she calls "Live Processing," in which, with the help of the composer and video artist Geoff Matters, she creates collagelike video environments to which the dancers respond in real time. In this way, she attempts to re-create the ways in which capitalism infiltrates the body, and to exorcise it. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Sept. 10-12.)

## "Arvo Pärt at Eighty"

As a companion to an exhibition of textiles inspired by Byzantine art, the museum hosts a concert at the Temple of Dendur, an homage to the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. In addition to performing chamber and vocal works, the New Juilliard Ensemble will accompany two dancers from New York City Ballet, Amar Ramasar and Rebecca Krohn, in a performance of Christopher Wheelodon's hypnotic pas de deux "Liturgy," set to Pärt's "Fratres," in which the dancers' bodies form mysterious, almost runic shapes in the half-light. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Sept. 11.)

## Mark Dendy Projects

For more than three decades, Dendy has been questioning gender norms and exploring ideas of sexual identity through dance theatre with leftist politics. It seems almost inevitable that he would take on the story of Chelsea Manning. In "Whistleblower," he focusses both on Manning's conviction for giving classified information to WikiLeaks and the moment when she announced that she was female. The original music (with lyrics by Dendy) is by Heather Christian, whose off-kilter songs have been highlights of recent Dendy productions. (Dixon Place, 161A Chrystie St. 866-811-4111. Sept. 11-12. Through Sept. 26.)

## "Tree of Codes"

The team behind this show—the choreographer Wayne McGregor, the artist Olafur Eliasson, and the composer Jamie xx—has cooked up a saturnalia of dizzying visual effects: agile dancers from the Paris Opera Ballet spiralling and twisting to cool, ambient sounds within a wonder world of lights, mirrors, and color. The gargantuan Drill Hall at the Park Avenue Armory is a perfect setting for what has been described, after a previous performance in Manchester, as "a kind of upmarket Cirque du Soleil." (The title of the work is drawn from Jonathan Safran Foer's eponymous book, which the author calls an "art object.") If relentless coolness and physical derring-do are what you want, you'll find them here. (Park Ave. at 66th St. 212-933-5812. Sept. 14-15. Through Sept. 21.)

# ABOVE & BEYOND

## Affordable Art Fair

In 1999, the gallerist Will Ramsay shone a light on local up-and-coming artists with the first Affordable Art Fair, in London. Since then, the fair has grown to sixteen editions in ten countries. All art on offer costs between a hundred dollars and ten thousand dollars, which, compared to the recent Picasso painting that sold at Christie's for \$179.4 million, is pretty true to the fair's name. Whereas other major fairs can be stuffy and intimidating to first-time buyers, this gathering, which includes more than seventy galleries from all over the world exhibiting works by thousands of artists, is designed for neophytes. A Web site includes tips for the uninitiated, including poetic advice from the German philosopher Schopenhauer: "Treat a work of art like a prince. Let it speak to you first." (The Metropolitan Pavilion,

125 W. 18th St. affordableartfair.com. Sept. 9-13.)

## AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

As summer draws to a close, the auction market springs to life. The new season begins, as usual, with a week of Asian-art sales at the big houses. Sotheby's offers Chinese art works—seventeenth-century vases, a white jade censer, and an impressive Quianlong gilt-bronze ritual bell among them—on Sept. 15, the same day as a curated sale ("Monochrome") of tasteful Chinese artifacts in muted colors, created in various eras. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.) • Christie's starts off the week with two sales of Southeast Asian and Himalayan art (Sept. 15), beginning with a private collection of bronzes dating back to the twelfth century, including a Tibetan depiction of a seated bodhisattva crowned in gold and turquoise, and

a sensual twelfth-century bronze of the Buddhist god Samvara, limbs entwined with those of a curvaceous yogini. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) • Swann opts to kick things off with something a bit more personal: a sale devoted to fifty works from the collection of the late poet, essayist, memoirist (and onetime actress and dancer) Maya Angelou (Sept. 15). One piece,

Faith Ringgold's "Maya's Quilt of Life"—commissioned by Oprah Winfrey—is a colorful collage of Angelou's life and writings, in quilted form. Several works in the sale, mostly watercolors, are by the North Carolina-born Romare Bearden, and there is even one small work in oil, "The Protector of Home and Family," by Angelou herself. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

## READINGS AND TALKS

### "Writing, War and Peace"

A night of readings, discussions, and music, to benefit Still Waters in a Storm, a "reading and writing sanctuary for children in Bushwick, Brooklyn," features Chris Hedges, Phil Klay, Roxana Robinson, and Ashley Gilbertson. (The New School, 66 W. 12th St. stillwatersinastorm.org. Sept. 11 at 7.)

### "Muldoon's Picnic"

Paul Muldoon, the poetry editor for this magazine, organizes a monthly gathering of writers and musicians at Irish Arts Center. On Sept. 14 at 7:30, he's joined by Peter Carey, Maureen N. McLane, and Bill Payne. (553 W. 51st St. irishartscenter.org.)



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# FOOD & DRINK

## BAR TAB MOTT HAVEN BAR AND GRILL

1 Bruckner Blvd., the Bronx  
(718-665-2001)

For a time, Bruckner Boulevard, in the South Bronx, was known mostly for being a wrong turn off the Triborough Bridge in “The Bonfire of the Vanities.” These days, it’s the pulsing heart of the scene known as SoBro. At the Mott Haven Bar and Grill, at the end of Bruckner, you can sit at a marble bar top and watch competitive arm wrestling on a screen while listening to nineties dance hits. What’s good to drink? “Mott Haven and the Bronx,” says Javie, the hoop-eared master of ceremonies, naming two beers on tap. Ask him nicely and he’ll muddle up a Jameson mojito, which tastes a little like a mojito, but mostly like Jameson. Fridays are packed with Bronx politicians, local business folk, and teachers. “Hipsters came here for a bit, but after a while they left. I guess they couldn’t hack it,” Javie said, on a recent evening. “Or they were just too lazy to learn Spanish,” said Rebecca, a Bronx-bred regular who met Javie on the outlaw rave scene (“Back then you followed the noise of the beat”). Later, two liquored guests asked a group of young Bronxites smoking outside if walking back across the bridge to Manhattan was a good idea. One replied, “I’ve never been so bold.” The guests took that as a challenge. The air off the Harlem River never smelled fresher.

—Nicolas Niarchos



## TABLES FOR TWO

# GANSO YAKI

515 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn (646-927-0303)

ONE OF THE LEAST HELPFUL words to describe a restaurant in Brooklyn is “casual”; it indicates that you can dress however you like, but says nothing about how much you’ll spend or what to expect from the food. Brooklyn’s Ganso Yaki is a self-described casual restaurant, akin to an *izakaya*, serving drinks and snacks, like yakitori—skewers of grilled poultry, usually chicken. An outcropping of very cheap, very dingy *izakayas* in the East Village is popular with N.Y.U. students (some are more lax about carding than others), but this is Boerum Hill, not St. Mark’s Place: the T-shirted patrons are two decades out of school and willing to pay more than a couple dollars per skewer. Prices are tweaked accordingly: edamame is six dollars instead of, say, four, because it is a premium variety of black soybean, slightly sweeter and larger than ordinary edamame, and comes dusted in sea salt imported from Japan. Ganso Yaki has the same blond-wood booths as its sister shop, Ganso Ramen, a few blocks away, but it’s more serene and airy: this is upscale casual.

A typical Japanese meal begins with small, delicate boiled and seasoned dishes served cold. On a recent evening, *bijiki*, a black seaweed, was nutty and tender, and *obitashi*, spinach steeped in dashi broth topped with flakes of bonito—dried, fermented skipjack tuna—came perfectly blanched. *Hiyayakko*, chilled tofu, was too firm to qualify as silken, and was saved from the brink of flavorlessness by ribbons of red onion, shiso, ginger, and more bonito. Of the hot street-food snacks, fried dark-meat chicken was juicy, but the batter was lacking in both crispness and flavor. A waiter recommended dressing the boneless nuggets in a house-made *yuzu*-chili oil; would that the kitchen had already taken the liberty. Another night, a party of three could barely finish half an *okonomiyaki*, a traditional thick egg-and-cabbage pancake punctuated with cubes of pork belly. Though it looked just right, topped with a lattice of Kewpie mayonnaise and sweet brown sauce, there was far too much of the latter to keep going after a few bites.

There are standouts, like tempura of kabocha squash, creamy as avocado, and a paddle of shiso, whole and flat like a beautiful leaf pressing. A skewer of chicken-leg meat was tender and thrillingly fatty, and the *tsukune*, perfectly spiced minced chicken, was the meat log you never knew you craved. These are elevated executions of skewer food—a category so ubiquitous in Japan it has its own emoji. Here the boutique bamboo-speared bites begin at nine dollars apiece, and the bill adds up, slowly but casually.

—Silvia Killingsworth

Open daily for dinner. Dishes \$5–\$18.

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## PROGRAM GUIDE

Tickets for The New Yorker Festival and Tech@Fest will go on sale at 12 noon E.T. on Friday, September 11th.\* Get tickets at [newyorker.com/festival](http://newyorker.com/festival).

\*MASTERCARD® ADVANCE TICKET SALE: Festival tickets will be available for MasterCard cardholders at 9 A.M. E.T. on Thursday, September 10th. See inside for details.

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# TECH@FEST

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Innovators, scientists, engineers, artists, and entrepreneurs will share their discoveries, endeavors, insights, and predictions—as well as their hopes and fears for the future.

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### CONVERSATION WITH MUSIC

#### SoundCloud Lounge

*Streaming the future.*

A conversation between the SoundCloud founder and C.E.O. **Alexander Ljung** and the *New Yorker* staff writer **John Seabrook**. Musical performances from prominent SoundCloud artists to be announced.

8 P.M. One World Trade Center (\$50)

## SATURDAY / OCT 3

### IN CONVERSATION

**Joi Ito**, the director of the M.I.T. Media Lab, talks with **Nicholas Thompson**

*Tomorrow today.*

10 A.M. One World Trade Center (\$45)

**Sean Murray**, the architect of the forthcoming video game *No Man's Sky*, talks with **Raffi Khatchadourian** and presents a preview of the game.

*Blast off.*

7 P.M. One World Trade Center (\$45)

### CONVERSATION WITH MUSIC

**Reggie Watts** talks with **Emma Allen**

*Marching to his own beat.*

10 P.M. One World Trade Center (\$40)

## SUNDAY / OCT 4

### SPONSOR EVENT

**THE FUTURE OF MONEY: THE NEXT BIG INNOVATION. PRESENTED BY CITI.**

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2 P.M. MasterCard Stage at SVA Theatre 2

333 West 23rd Street (FREE)

### PANELS

#### CRISPR

*Cutting-edge gene technology.*

With **Jennifer Doudna**, **Kevin Esvelt**, **Henry Greely**, and **Feng Zhang**.

Moderated by **Michael Specter**.

1 P.M. One World Trade Center (\$45)

#### Cyber Privacy

*Who owns your information?*

With **Cindy Cohn**, **Nick Denton**, and **Barton Gellman**. Moderated by **Evan Osnos**.

4 P.M. One World Trade Center (\$45)

## SPONSOR HIGHLIGHTS

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### THE COSMOPOLITAN OF LAS VEGAS

The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas has long been at the forefront of presenting participatory and engaging contemporary art, from its innovative PAUSE program, which takes over the resort's L.E.D. displays on the Las Vegas Strip, to the interactive artist-in-residence program at P3Studio. In the spirit of The Cosmopolitan's commitment to experiences that sit at the intersection of art and technology, Laurie Simmons's 2014 film *"Ringtone,"* currently featured as a part of PAUSE at The Cosmopolitan, will be presented throughout Tech@Fest for all attendees to view.



## SATURDAY/ OCT 3

### ABOUT TOWN

**Morning at the Whitney**  
**Peter Schjeldahl** will lead a tour of the museum before public hours begin, followed by coffee and conversation.  
9:30 A.M. The Whitney Museum  
99 Gansevoort Street (\$120)

### IN CONVERSATION

**Junot Díaz talks with Aleksandar Hemon**  
*Bruno and Oscar and others.*  
10 A.M. Gramercy Theatre  
127 East 23rd Street (\$40)

**Larry Kramer talks with Calvin Trillin**  
*American gadfly.*  
10 A.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 2  
333 West 23rd Street (\$40)

**Jonathan Safran Foer talks with George Saunders**  
*Everything is permitted.*  
1 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre  
110 West 57th Street (\$40)

**Jeffrey Tambor talks with Ariel Levy**  
*Transparent.*  
1 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 2  
333 West 23rd Street (\$40)

**Jason Segel talks with Michael Schulman**  
*Infinite jester.*  
4 P.M. Acura at SIR Stage37  
508 West 37th Street (\$40)

**Sleater-Kinney talks with Dana Goodyear**  
*Riot grrrls.*  
4 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre  
110 West 57th Street (\$40)

**Zaha Hadid talks with John Seabrook**  
*Architecture of tomorrow.*  
4 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 1  
333 West 23rd Street (\$40)

**Larry Wilmore talks with David Remnick**  
*Keeping it 100.*  
4 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 2  
333 West 23rd Street (\$40)

**Marc Maron talks with Kelefa Sanneh**  
*W.T.F.*  
7 P.M. Acura at SIR Stage37  
508 West 37th Street (\$45)

**Adam Driver talks with Lizzie Widdicombe**  
*Off-kilter charisma.*  
7 P.M. Gramercy Theatre  
127 East 23rd Street (\$45)

**Norman Lear talks with Emily Nussbaum**  
*The father of funny.*  
7 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 1  
333 West 23rd Street (\$45)

**Damian Lewis talks with Lauren Collins**  
*Hero and antihero.*  
7 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 2  
333 West 23rd Street (\$45)

**Jesse Eisenberg talks with Susan Morrison**  
*High-wire actor.*  
10 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre  
110 West 57th Street (\$45)

**Patti Smith talks with David Remnick**  
*Life off the M train.*  
9:30 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 1  
333 West 23rd Street (\$45)

**Ellie Kemper talks with Lauren Collins**  
*Unbreakable.*  
10 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 2  
333 West 23rd Street (\$45)

**CONVERSATIONS WITH MUSIC**  
**Mark Ronson talks with John Seabrook**  
*Uptown funk.*  
10 P.M. Acura at SIR Stage37  
508 West 37th Street (\$45)

**Cuba, Si**  
*El futuro es ahora.*  
With **Elaine Díaz Rodríguez**, **Pedrito Martínez**, and **Yoss**. Performances by **Descemer Bueno** and the **Pedrito Martínez Group**. Moderated by **Jon Lee Anderson**.  
10 P.M. Gramercy Theatre  
127 East 23rd Street (\$45)

Find the full program  
with the latest updates at  
[newyorker.com/festival](http://newyorker.com/festival).

## FRIDAY/OCT 2

### IN CONVERSATION

**Toni Morrison talks with Hilton Als**  
*Beloved.*  
7 P.M. Acura at SIR Stage37  
508 West 37th Street (\$45)

**Don DeLillo talks with Deborah Treisman**  
*Silence, exile, cunning.*  
7 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre  
110 West 57th Street (\$45)

**Jim Gaffigan talks with Andy Borowitz**  
*Hot topics, hot pockets.*  
7 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 1  
333 West 23rd Street (\$45)

**Sigourney Weaver talks with Anthony Lane**  
*Avatars, aliens, gorillas, and ghosts.*  
7 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 2  
333 West 23rd Street (\$45)

**Andrew Jarecki talks with Patrick Radden Keefe**  
*Documentarian.*  
9:30 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 2  
333 West 23rd Street (\$45)

**Ilana Glazer and Abbi Jacobson talk with Emily Nussbaum**  
*The broads of "Broad City."*  
10 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 1  
333 West 23rd Street (\$45)

### CONVERSATIONS WITH MUSIC

**HAIM talks with Kelefa Sanneh**  
*Sisters in song.*  
7 P.M. Gramercy Theatre  
127 East 23rd Street (\$45)

**Trey Anastasio talks with Alec Wilkinson**  
*Guitar god.*  
9:30 P.M. Acura at SIR Stage37  
508 West 37th Street (\$45)

**The New R. & B.**  
*Keeping the beat.*  
With **Azekel, Bilal, James Fauntleroy**, and **Kelela**.  
Moderated by **Andrew Marantz**.  
10 P.M. Gramercy Theatre  
127 East 23rd Street (\$45)

### SNEAK PREVIEW

**"Very Semi-Serious: A Partially Thorough Portrait of New Yorker Cartoonists"**  
A preview screening of the HBO feature documentary, followed by a conversation with **Liana Finck, Emily Flake, Mort Gerberg**, and **Robert Mankoff**.  
Moderated by **Roz Chast**.  
9:30 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre  
110 West 57th Street (\$45)

### SPONSOR EVENT

**FLAVOR PROFILES**  
PRESENTED BY THE GLENLIVET  
Brought together by the original tastemaker, The Glenlivet, visionaries from the New York food scene discuss the personal narratives we bring to creating and sharing food and drink. Tastings included; event limited to guests 21 and over. For more information, visit [newyorkeronthetown.com/festival/glenlivet](http://newyorkeronthetown.com/festival/glenlivet).  
8:30 P.M. the cell  
338 West 23rd Street (FREE)



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## SATURDAY/OCT 3 (Continued)

### PANELS

#### Justice Delayed

*Guilty until proven innocent.*  
With **Shawn Armbrust**,  
**Tyrone Hood**, former  
**Governor Patrick Quinn**,  
and **District Attorney**  
**Ken Thompson**. Moderated by  
**Nicholas Schmidle**.

10 A.M. Directors Guild Theatre  
110 West 57th Street (\$40)

#### The Really Big One

*9 on the Richter scale.*  
With **Chris Goldfinger**,  
**Stephen Mahin**, and  
**Carmen Merlo**. Moderated  
by **Kathryn Schulz**.

10 A.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 1  
333 West 23rd Street (\$40)

#### Misfits

*Complicated characters.*  
With **Joshua Ferris**, **Yiyun Li**,  
and **Lionel Shriver**. Moderated  
by **Willing Davidson**.

1 P.M. Gramercy Theatre  
127 East 23rd Street (\$40)

#### The Writing Process

*Fits and starts.*  
With **Jeffrey Eugenides**,  
**Sheila Heti**, and **Ben Lerner**.  
Moderated by  
**Cressida Leyshon**.

4 P.M. Gramercy Theatre  
127 East 23rd Street (\$40)

### TALKS

#### Malcolm Gladwell

*Conjuring the Behemoth*  
10 A.M. Acura at SIR Stage37  
508 West 37th Street (\$40)

#### Atul Gawande

*Was Your Operation Necessary?*  
1 P.M. Acura at SIR Stage37  
508 West 37th Street (\$40)

#### Matthew Diffie

*Hand Drawn Jokes for Smart*  
*Attractive People: A One-Man*  
*Show with Pictures and Music*  
1 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 1  
333 West 23rd Street (\$40)

### SNEAK PREVIEW

#### "The Lady in the Van"

A preview screening of the  
feature film adapted from a  
play by Alan Bennett, followed  
by a conversation between  
**Judith Thurman** and the  
director, **Nicholas Hytner**.  
6:30 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre  
110 West 57th Street (\$45)

### TABLES FOR TWO

#### Travelling Dinner Parties

Join Tables for Two for a  
themed, critic-curated dinner  
at a variety of Manhattan  
restaurants (alcohol included  
and transportation provided):

**Noodletown**, hosted by  
**Silvia Killingsworth**

**Healthy-ish**, hosted by  
**Amelia Lester**

**French Twist**, hosted by  
**Sauna Lyon**

Ticket buyers will be contacted  
concerning times and meeting  
locations. (\$225 each.)

## SUNDAY/OCT 4

### ABOUT TOWN

#### Come Hungry

**Calvin Trillin** will lead his  
fourteen annual walk  
from Greenwich Village to  
Chinatown, stopping at his  
favorite eateries.

11 A.M. Ticket buyers will be  
contacted concerning the  
meeting location. (\$150)

### IN CONVERSATION

#### Congressman John Lewis

talks with **David Remnick**  
*Freedom fighter.*  
2 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre  
110 West 57th Street (\$40)

#### JR talks with

#### Françoise Mouly

*Showing the world its face.*  
Including a preview screening  
of JR's short film "Ellis."  
2:30 P.M. Gramercy Theatre  
127 East 23rd Street (\$40)

#### Lin-Manuel Miranda

talks with **Rebecca Mead**  
*Not throwing away his shot.*  
5 P.M. Directors Guild Theatre  
110 West 57th Street (\$40)

#### Julianna Margulies

talks with **Joshua Rothman**  
*Executive decisions.*  
5 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 1  
333 West 23rd Street (\$40)

### CONVERSATION WITH MUSIC

#### Billy Joel talks with

**Nick Paumgarten**  
*New York's finest.*  
5 P.M. Acura at SIR Stage37  
508 West 37th Street (\$75)

### PANELS

#### The Fire This Time

*Black in the U.S.A.*  
With **Ta-Nehisi Coates**, **Danai**  
**Gurira**, **Claudia Rankine**, **David**  
**Simon**, and **Jesse Williams**.  
Moderated by **Jelani Cobb**.  
12 P.M. Acura at SIR Stage37  
508 West 37th Street (\$40)

#### The Hillary Question

*Our first female President?*  
With **Geraldo Cadava**,  
**Amy Davidson**, **Roxane Gay**,  
and **Frances Townsend**.  
Moderated by **Jill Lepore**.  
12 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 1  
333 West 23rd Street (\$40)

#### Nouveau Science Fiction

*Reinventing the genre.*  
With **Emily St. John Mandel**,  
**Brit Marling**, and **Jonathan Nolan**.  
Moderated by **Daniel Zalewski**.  
2:30 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 1  
333 West 23rd Street (\$40)

### TALKS

#### Larissa MacFarquhar

*Strangers Drowning*  
11 A.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 2  
333 West 23rd Street (\$40)

#### Andrew Solomon

*Love Against the Odds: Parents,*  
*Children, and the Search for Identity*  
5 P.M. MasterCard Stage  
at SVA Theatre 2  
333 West 23rd Street (\$40)

### SNEAK PREVIEW

#### "Cleo"

A reading of **Lawrence Wright's**  
new play about the fraught  
production of the 1963 Hollywood  
film "Cleopatra" and the scan-  
dalous love affair between  
**Elizabeth Taylor** and **Richard**  
**Burton**. Directed by **Bob Balaban**,  
with **Damian Lewis** as **Richard**  
**Burton** and the rest of the  
cast to be announced.  
11 A.M. Directors Guild Theatre  
110 West 57th Street (\$40)

## HOW TO PURCHASE TICKETS

Tickets for The New Yorker  
Festival will go on sale at  
12 noon E.T. on Friday,  
September 11th.\*

\*MasterCard® cardholders get  
early access to tickets for all  
Festival events, beginning at 9 A.M.  
E.T. on Thursday, September 10th,  
until 12 midnight. To purchase, go  
to [newyorker.com/festival](http://newyorker.com/festival). While  
supplies last. (Online only.)

ONLINE: All tickets will be sold  
at [newyorker.com/festival](http://newyorker.com/festival).

### AT MASTERCARD STAGE AT

**SVA THEATRE:** The theatre  
box office will sell all remaining  
tickets throughout Festival  
weekend. Box office hours:

October 2nd: 10 A.M. - 10 P.M.  
October 3rd: 9 A.M. - 10 P.M.  
October 4th: 10 A.M. - 3 P.M.

Tickets will be available at the  
box office up to two hours prior  
to each event. The theatre is at  
333 West 23rd Street (between  
Eighth and Ninth Avenues).  
First come, first served.

**AT THE DOOR:** A limited  
number of tickets will be  
sold at the door to each event  
one hour before start time.  
First come, first served.  
For exceptions, please visit  
[newyorker.com/festival](http://newyorker.com/festival).

Will-call orders may be picked up  
at each event one hour before  
start time. **All international**  
**orders will be held at will call.**

(Tickets are not available for  
purchase by telephone.)

Please note that purchases are  
subject to service charges. New  
York City taxes may be applicable  
for certain events. For venue age  
limits and wheelchair accessibility,  
please visit [newyorker.com/festival](http://newyorker.com/festival).  
Production services provided by  
the Overland Entertainment  
Company.

All programming is subject  
to change.

For the latest  
programming updates,  
visit [newyorker.com/festival](http://newyorker.com/festival).

## BOOK SIGNINGS

### SATURDAY / OCTOBER 3

12 noon **Sheila Heti** • **Yoss**  
1 P.M. **Junot Díaz** • **Aleksandar Hemon**  
2 P.M. **Larry Kramer** • **Roxane Gay**  
3 P.M. **Mary Norris** • **Matthew Diffie**  
4 P.M. **Atul Gawande** • **William Finnegan**

### SUNDAY / OCTOBER 4

1 P.M. **George Saunders** • **Jesse Eisenberg**  
2 P.M. **Joshua Ferris**  
3 P.M. **Andrew Solomon** • **Larissa MacFarquhar**  
4 P.M. **Emily St. John Mandel** • **Lionel Shriver**

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# THE NEW YORKER FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 2 | 3 | 4 2015

## SPONSOR HIGHLIGHTS

### MASTERCARD® CARDHOLDER EXCLUSIVE BENEFITS

MasterCard cardholders are invited to enjoy a special treat at a selection of New York's culinary hotspots during Festival weekend. Visit **Il Gelato at Eataly** (200 Fifth Avenue), **Doughnut Plant** (220 West 23rd Street), or **The Meatball Shop** (200 Ninth Avenue) and receive a treat when you present your MasterCard and a Festival ticket or voucher.\*

Visit MasterCard Stage at SVA Theatre throughout Festival weekend and you could receive a **gift**, compliments of MasterCard Priceless® New York.\*\*

\*No purchase necessary at Il Gelato or Doughnut Plant. For a special treat at The Meatball Shop, you must make at least one menu purchase with your MasterCard. One item per customer, Saturday, October 3rd, and Sunday, October 4th, while supplies last.

\*\*Gifts available to MasterCard cardholders only during The New Yorker Festival, from Friday, October 2nd – Sunday, October 4th, 2015. Cardholder must show MasterCard card to receive a gift. One gift per cardholder, while supplies last.

### THRILLING EXPERIENCES, Sponsored by Acura

On Saturday, October 3rd, and Sunday, October 4th, Acura will offer **complimentary shuttle service in an Acura MDX**, one of the world's most intelligent sport-utility vehicles. Transportation will be provided from **McNally Jackson Books** and **Acura at SIR Stage37** to select Festival venues.

Can't get enough cartoons? Be a part of one with a **life-size cartoon photo booth** at Acura at SIR Stage37—the perfect photo op! Test your wit and enter the **Acura Cartoon Caption Contest** at Acura at SIR Stage37.

### HOSPITALITY EXACTLY LIKE NOTHING ELSE, Sponsored by Autograph Collection Hotels

Autograph Collection Hotels offers a **special Festival hotel-booking package** at **The Algonquin** (59 West 44th Street) and **The Lexington** (511 Lexington Avenue) hotels. For booking details, visit [AutographHotels.com/TNYFestival](http://AutographHotels.com/TNYFestival).

Follow the cultural influencers **Alice Gao** (@alice\_gao) and **Adam Gallagher** (@iamgalla) on Instagram and Twitter as they report on their favorite Festival events and their stays at Autograph Collection Hotels in New York City.

Visit the **Autograph Collection Hotels Concierge** at the Directors Guild Theatre (110 West 57th Street) on Saturday, October 3rd, and Sunday, October 4th, for information on happenings during Festival weekend and special gifts.

### VISIT THE UNITED AIRLINES LOUNGE

Take a break between events and enjoy complimentary coffee and sweet treats at the **United Airlines Lounge** (the cell, 338 West 23rd Street).

#### Lounge Hours:

Saturday, October 3rd, 11:30 A.M. – 10 P.M.  
Sunday, October 4th, 12:30 P.M. – 5 P.M.

### Free Special Events at the United Airlines Lounge:

#### Saturday, October 3rd

11:30 A.M.

Cartooning with the *New Yorker* cartoonists **Drew Dernavich** and **Emily Flake**

5:30 P.M.

The *New Yorker* cartoonist **Matthew Diffie** signs his book **"Hand Drawn Jokes for Smart Attractive People"**

8:30 P.M.

Meet **Charles Joly**, a James Beard Award winner and the creator of **Crafthouse Cocktails**

#### Sunday, October 4th

12:30 P.M.

Mini Spa Treatments from Soho House's **Cowshed Spa**

4 P.M.

The *New Yorker* staff writer **William Finnegan** signs his book **"Barbarian Days: A Surfing Life"**

### MAKE YOUR DOG A CARTOON CHARACTER, Compliments of Shinola

In a celebration of the magazine's dog cartoons, Shinola will host *New Yorker* cartoonists on Saturday, October 3rd, as they create complimentary in-store portraits. Bring your dog to the Shinola store, 177 Franklin Street, between 12 noon and 5 P.M., to view an exhibit of *The New Yorker's* dog covers and sit with your canine companion for a cartoon.





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## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

### COMMENT

PAGING DR. CARSON

Ben Carson had wanted to be a doctor since he was a child in Detroit in the early nineteen-sixties, but he had the first inkling of what kind of doctor he might be when, as an undergraduate at Yale, he was introduced to Foosball. He played the game “with speed and ease,” he writes in his memoir, “Gifted Hands.” He had “an unusual ability—a divine gift, I believe—of extraordinary eye and hand coordination.” Even after he graduated and went on to medical school at the University of Michigan, a Yale student who made a great Foosball play was said to have scored a “Carson shot.” In the movie version of “Gifted Hands,” broadcast on TNT, in 2009, Cuba Gooding, Jr., as Carson, works the levers with a Jedi-like air—reprised in a later scene in which, during a twenty-two-hour procedure, Dr. Carson separates twin infants conjoined at the head. They were the first ever to survive such surgery.

Carson mentioned that operation in the first Republican Presidential debate, last month. “I’m the only one to separate Siamese twins,” he said. “The only one to take out half of a brain, although you would think, if you go to Washington, that someone had beat me to it.” It was a Carson shot. Last week, a Monmouth University poll had him in second place among Republicans, with eighteen per cent, behind Donald Trump’s thirty per cent—meaning that the choice of nearly half the respondents was someone who has never held political office.

There have been attempts to explain Carson’s rise as being simply a piece with this disjointed election season. Sunny and unflappable, he has been seen as the refined Trump (Rich Lowry, of *National Review*, called him the “superior outsider”), or the Trump that not even Trump can hate (the Donald says that he’s “a wonderful guy”). The standard narrative is that Carson first appeared on the political scene in 2013, when, at the National Prayer Breakfast, he told his life story in a speech that, as the Fox News world heard it, was a rebuke to the President, who was sitting on the dais. In

fact, Carson has been out telling that story for twenty-five years.

His mother, Sonya, married his father when she was thirteen and he was twenty-eight. He turned out to be a bigamist and, once he was gone, Sonya supported Ben and his older brother by cleaning houses. When the boys struggled in school, she made them turn off the TV, read two library books a week, and write reports on them. She was functionally illiterate, but, as Carson said at the Prayer Breakfast, “we didn’t know that—she put check marks and highlights and stuff.” He went from the bottom of the class to near the top. His mother’s motto, which informs Carson’s conservatism, was: “If you don’t succeed, you have only yourself to blame.” But Carson grew up a devout Seventh-Day Adventist, and “Gifted Hands,” like his campaign, is also about grace. When he was in ninth grade, after a friend teased him, he pulled out a knife and thrust it at the friend’s stomach. The boy could have died; Carson could have gone to jail. Instead, the blade hit his friend’s belt buckle and broke. Carson ran home, locked himself in the bathroom with the Book of Proverbs, and prayed to God to take away his temper. He says that he walked out a different person.

In 1977, when Carson began his residency, at Johns Hopkins, he was sometimes assumed to be an orderly, but he regarded that as “a natural mistake”—what other black men did people see in hospitals? “I got a real kick out of watch-

ing them try to contain their expression of surprise,” he writes. He became an outstanding and innovative surgeon and, in 1984, at the age of thirty-three, the youngest head of a pediatric-neurosurgery department in the country. His joke about taking out half a brain was a reference to his pioneering work on hemispherectomies; the breakthrough case involved a four-year-old girl who had been racked by a hundred seizures a day.

“Gifted Hands” was published by the Christian imprint Zondervan in 1990, after the surgery on the twins, and it has sold more than a million and a half copies. It is often assigned in schools, and a





condensed version is being sold to fund Carson's campaign. (According to the *Times*, as of July he had raised eighty per cent of his money from small donors, a higher proportion than any candidate except Bernie Sanders.) Carson has since written more books, started an educational nonprofit with his wife, Candy (they met at Yale, and have three sons), and gone on speaking tours. There is a parallel between his political emergence and that of Ronald Reagan, whose Prayer Breakfast moment was a televised speech in support of Barry Goldwater in 1964. The speech, titled "A Time for Choosing," had been honed by Reagan during the decade he spent as a spokesman for General Electric, making appearances at company events in towns across the country.

Then, as now, the Republican Party was shifting in ways that were only peripherally visible to its ostensible leaders. Carson's venues have been schools, churches, and gatherings of conservative activists, many of whom deeply distrust both their government and the larger institutions of their party. Their discontent, joined with what Carson sees as the lessons of his mother's rejection of dependency, seems to have been a crucible for his own views. Eventually, he moved from offering himself as a role model to being a prescriber of policy.

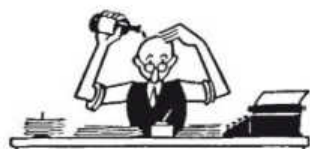
Carson speaks to an unnerved America in terms that are themselves unnerving. He describes how our "pinnacle nation" is about to be driven down by moral decay. In his most recent book, "One America," he writes that agents working against this country's greatness include the political-correctness police, who use "faux hypersensitivity" to take power

away from the majority of Americans. He regularly traces that strategy to Saul Alinsky, the mid-century community organizer whose name is a byword for conservative suspicions about Barack Obama. Political correctness, Carson says, is used to keep conservatives from invoking slavery or Nazism, both of which he cites freely. ("Obamacare is really, I think, the worst thing that has happened in this nation since slavery"; "We live in a Gestapo age.") He wonders if Obama will cause the elections to be cancelled: "He's sitting there saying, 'These Americans are so stupid I can tell them anything.'" Trump, the businessman, tells Americans how the financial system is rigged against them. Carson, the brain surgeon, tells them how they are being denied knowledge. It doesn't seem to matter that he is a man of science who does not believe in evolution and has called climate change "irrelevant": he is an ideologue with the trappings of a technocrat.

Insofar as Carson has a political platform, it involves a low flat tax, modelled on the Biblical tithe; an end to Obamacare and to welfare for able-bodied adults; and the removal of restraints on our military in the Middle East. In lieu of specifics, Carson tends to say that as a surgeon he has experience "doing complex things" and making snap life-or-death decisions. His success in the polls may be best understood as desperation on the part of voters who have rejected political experience as a test of competence. But it should take more than a Carson shot to navigate this Presidential campaign, which has been played, so far, with all the reckless abandon of a Foosball game, and with little of the joy.

—Amy Davidson

## WHEN IN ROME DEPT. BY A HAIR



**B**ernie Sanders recently complained when a *Times Magazine* reporter asked him about his hair. "When the media worries about what Hillary's hair looks like or what my hair looks like," he said, "that's a real problem."

Americans love to talk about hairdos. There are at least six hair-themed reality shows airing right now, including "Shear Genius" ("Hell Breaks Loose Over Hedge Clippers"), "Hair Battle Spectacular" ("The Final Hairdown"), and "Cutting It: In the ATL" ("The Tale of Two Weaves"). "Hair is a language," Penny Howell Jolly, a professor of art history at Skidmore, wrote in a 2010 *Times* piece, comparing the coiffures of U.S. Presidents. "It announces our gender, class and even our politics."

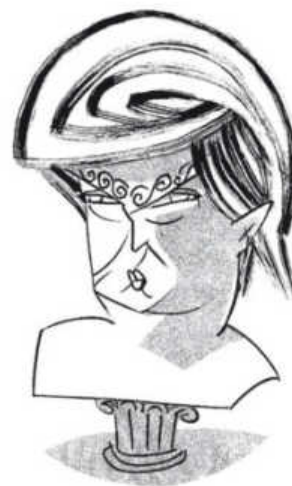
A Baltimore hairdresser named Janet Stephens has taken the national preoccupation farther—certainly farther back—than anyone. Stephens is fifty-seven and has red-violet hair with a metallic sheen ("I was born dishwater blond") that she wears shoulder length, with short bangs. "I've pretty much invented the field of ancient Roman hair-style re-creation," she said last week, before heading over to Studio 921 Salon & Day Spa, where she is a stylist. "I'm a hairdressing archeologist."

Stephens earned a B.A. in dramatic arts from Whitman College but has studied ancient hair styles on her own for fifteen years. A statue of the Roman empress Julia Domna, at a Baltimore museum, initially piqued her interest: the statue is crowned with a complex bun that, as Stephens tried to replicate it on mannequins, led her down a rabbit hole of scholarship.

Her sources: "surviving ancient literary and material evidence, including Roman portraiture, hairdressing artifacts, and epigraphy." Most of the

texts are in translation. "I'm halfway through first-year Latin on CD," she said. Nevertheless, Stephens has published an article in the *Journal of Roman Archaeology* and was recently asked to write an entry on ancient hair styles for a forthcoming encyclopedia. "Intimidating," she said.

Lately, she has been getting inquiries about the provenance of Donald Trump's hair style. "The comb-over



Donald Trump



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# HARDBALL

WITH CHRIS MATTHEWS

WEEKNIGHTS 7<sup>PM</sup> ET

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goes back to ancient Rome, at least," she said. "Roman comb-overs were not based on the side part, as they are today. To part the hair was an exclusively feminine practice avoided by 'manly' Roman men. If a Roman man's hair was thinning, but still present, he allowed the hair at the crown to grow longer and combed it forward. This type of comb-over is visible on portrait statues of Emperor Hadrian. If a man was hippocratically bald"—hairless on top, like Hippocrates—"he would grow any remaining side hair longer and comb each side up over the top to meet in the middle. These comb-overs were unstable, because of gravity and wind. They were likely held in place with pomade or primitive hair gels made from acacia gum—ancient versions of the hairspray, in other words, that keeps Donald Trump's signature comb-over in place.

"I can talk about pretty much every candidate," Stephens went on. "A few general points: Carly Fiorina, Jim Webb, Ted Cruz, and Trump all would have mocking epigrams written about their dye jobs. Jeb Bush would fit right into the first century A.D., the bridge between the Republic and the principate. Ben Carson looks more like a third-century soldier: he has great dignity, but he doesn't really resemble any Roman emperors. Chris Christie could be Emperor Vespasian, but he'd have to lose a little more hair. He'd also have to brush forward and trim his bangs. He resembles Vespasian mostly in facial shape and attitude.

"Ted Cruz would fit perfectly in ancient Rome. Carly Fiorina, absolutely not: short hair was a sign you'd been conquered. Jim Gilmore vaguely resembles Emperor Galba, from the first century. I'm amazed at how many styles Bobby Jindal has had. He'd fit into the Trajanic period, early second century. Perfect throughout the Mediterranean world."

As for Lindsey Graham, Mike Huckabee, John Kasich, George Pataki, Rick Perry, Marco Rubio, and Rick Santorum, "they'd all be fine in ancient Rome if they combed forward. Rand Paul has a kind of disturbing resemblance to Patrick Stewart in 'I, Claudius.' That curly hair with a very

slight leftward part: you could just drop him into the middle of ancient Rome and, except for eye color, he'd fit.

"Scott Walker resembles Emperor Tiberius. Lincoln Chafee bears an interesting similarity to Emperor Trajan, but he'd need a cleft chin. Hillary Clinton, because of her short hair and blue eyes, would be a captive like Fiorina. Bernie Sanders carries the spirit of Rome. He lets his hair grow out between cuts, perfect for ancient Roman portraiture: 'uncared-for beauty,' as Ovid would have said.

"Donald Trump is the outlier. Definitely the *Gallus comatus*, or long-haired Gaul. His comb-over is just too much for ancient Rome." She paused to look up a line of verse. "Martial wrote a funny poem about an acquaintance with a comb-over, Epigram 10.83. I'm partial to a translation that ends, 'Why not be straightforward and admit to being an old man/so that at last you look like *one* man?/Nothing is uglier than a bald head with a lot of hair.'"

—Charles Bethea

## THE PICTURES MODERN ROMANCE



As Leslye Headland boarded the Circle Line for the Statue of Liberty, she cocked her head at the guide's boomerily folksy welcome. "It's Garrison Keillor!" she cried, because it clearly wasn't. The thirty-four-year-old writer-director wore a jumper and a sweatshirt whose sleeves half covered the tattoos on her forearms: "How Would Lubitsch Do It?," Billy Wilder's memo to himself to think like his mentor, Ernst Lubitsch, and "The Only Winning Move Is Not to Play," from "WarGames." She also has "Redrum" on her back, from Stanley Kubrick's "The Shining." Movies are her compass points. "My kids"—as yet hypothetical—"will be totally hating my tattoos; that whole generation will be grossed out," she said. "But you're going to fuck up your kids no matter what, so why not do it with some pizzazz?"

In her sixteen years in Manhattan, Headland had been on a boat only once before: when she filmed on the East River, for her bawdy romantic comedy "Sleeping with Other People," which opens this week. "It seemed like a cheap way to get a skyline," she said. In the scene, Jake (Jason Sudeikis) and his best friend, Lainey (Alison Brie),



Leslye Headland

plan to take Ecstasy to prep for a kids' birthday party. Jake is a womanizer and Lainey is hung up on a mean, married gynecologist; the solution to both problems is evident, at least to the audience. "We had a larger scene there originally, where Lainey said it was comforting to be a tourist in their own city, and Jake said that's what the two of them are—tourists who aren't willing to commit. But it turns out the city spoke for itself."

Headland explained that she's close to an actor named Michael, and, one day when they were at brunch, "being really snarky about people in relationships, it hit me—we totally look like a couple! And that would be a good movie." As she had just escaped an affair with a married man, she wrote that into the film, too. "And then I realized, Oops, they already made this movie—it's 'When Harry Met Sally' and 'The Apartment.'" She did Fred MacMurray chiding Shirley MacLaine in the latter film: "'Come on, Fran—don't be like that.' Don't be like *what*? You mean, having feelings? At least in the sixties if you were somebody's mistress they'd buy you dinner. Now you just have people who text you, fuck you, and throw you



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away. Or am I sounding old-timey?"

As the guide rhapsodized about Henry Hudson discovering the mouth of his eponymous river—"Twould be the acorn from which all you see around you sprung"—Headland whispered, "This guy also does a 'Walking Dead' recap." Having recently given up smoking, her last vice, she fiddled with a gold elephant on a chain. "Rom-coms were always ninety minutes of a man and a woman talking, having sex in another way, through the conversation," she said. "How do you make a rom-com for twenty-four-year-olds who have no idea what courtship or foreplay is, who just hook up on Tinder?"

As the tourists raised their phones en masse to shoot Lady Liberty, Headland glanced over and continued, "I felt like if the main characters aren't going to have sex we need to see the sex around them. So those scenes were heavily storyboarded. With Lainey and Sobvechik"—the lover/gynecologist—"he's on the top and he calls her Elaine, which her father called her, so it's father-daughter. With Jake and Paula"—his hookup/manager—"it's boss-employee, she's on top, and she tells him when it's O.K. to finish, so it's mother-son." She toyed with the elephant. "I think it was Mamet who said, 'Everything is about sex but sex, which is about power.'"

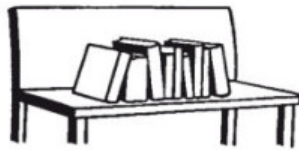
Jake and Lainey begin to get intimate, at least emotionally, when he instructs her in self-gratification, using an empty green-tea bottle as a stand-in for a vagina. "I was a virgin until I was twenty-one or twenty-two," Headland said, "but I had a party trick where, if I was tipsy, I'd tell guys the five easy tricks to please a woman." She demonstrated the moves in the air, intoning, "Clear the cobwebs, tap the roof, circle the message, pull the curtains, and lick the curtain rod." The tourists remained unaccountably focussed on the guide.

As she debarked, Headland noted that she was now dating a woman. "My dad was so into movies that I was raised non-gender-specific," she said. "He made me watch 'Love and Death' and 'Manhattan' when I was really young, saying, 'You're not a worthwhile human being until you've seen these!' But then

he'd fast-forward through all the pre- and postcoital scenes. So, while I talk a lot about sex, I'm still not totally sure what's going on."

—Tad Friend

## POSTSCRIPT OLIVER SACKS



Four weeks before Oliver Sacks died, I received a letter from him. In our all too brief correspondence, he never e-mailed. He wrote beautiful, long-hand letters on heavy, cream-colored stationery with a blue fountain pen, the script slanting to the left. They were always peppered with cross-outs and insertions that gave a glimpse of his overflowing mind.

"I'm writing a piece on EYES—all sorts, from those of jellyfish and scallops and jumping spiders and octopi to our (vertebrate) eyes," he reported. "I am also trying to write something about the (deadly) effects of 'social-media' when they absorb people, to the exclusion of everything else, throughout their waking hours." He told of his delight in coming upon a century-old E. M. Forster short story called "The Machine Stops." "Do you know it?" he asked. Forster, he said, had foreseen such possibilities.

"But I don't know if I can complete the pieces," he went on. "I fear I am losing ground fast." He was having trouble breathing and was growing weaker.

No one taught me more about how to be a doctor than Oliver Sacks. I first encountered his writing during medical school, when I picked up his classic collection "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat." The stories in the book were more than a decade old—ancient history, in medical science—but Sacks's voice was already timeless. He told, simply, of a few patients he had seen, and their unusual neurological conditions. But he did so with the sort of inquisitiveness and observational power that I, as a young doctor-to-be, could not help but want to emulate. He captured both the medical and

the human drama of illness, and the task of the clinician observing it.

"Dr. P," the subject of the famous title story, was a distinguished musician and teacher at a school of music who'd lost the ability to recognize the faces of his students. At the same time, oddly, "he saw faces when there were no faces to see: genially, Magoo-like, when in the street he might pat the heads of water hydrants and parking meters, taking these to be heads of children; he would amiably address carved knobs on the furniture and be astounded when they did not reply."

Sacks was unendingly curious, and I, like millions of readers, eagerly followed him on his explorations—into why music moves human beings, what it's like to have amnesia or autism or drug-induced hallucinations, what was wrong with this man who could not recognize faces. Dr. P was a puzzle, and Sacks regarded him with unapologetic fascination. So did we all.

It could make me uncomfortable at times. Sacks observed his subjects with a naturalist's dispassion, and when his descriptions made me laugh or gasp or turn the page to find out more about the person's predicament I felt complicit. Following Sacks as he examined Dr. P from head to toe, we learned that Sacks could find no visual abnormalities or telltale signs. But, when he asked Dr. P to get dressed afterward, the patient had trouble figuring out if his foot had a shoe on it or not. Then, when that was sorted for him, "he reached out his hand and took hold of his wife's head, tried to lift it off, to put it on. He had apparently mistaken his wife for a hat!"

As a student, I wanted my unabashed enthralment to be redeemed by an account of how Sacks's often decidedly personal investigations resulted in a solution, a treatment. But mostly they didn't. His careful observations of Dr. P gradually led to the conclusion that he had a disease that caused severe damage to the areas of the brain that process visual information. Nothing could be done about it. The disease advanced inexorably until Dr. P's death. But it was still essential, Sacks wanted us to know, simply to understand. This was his deeper lesson. His most important role, as a doctor and as a writer, was to

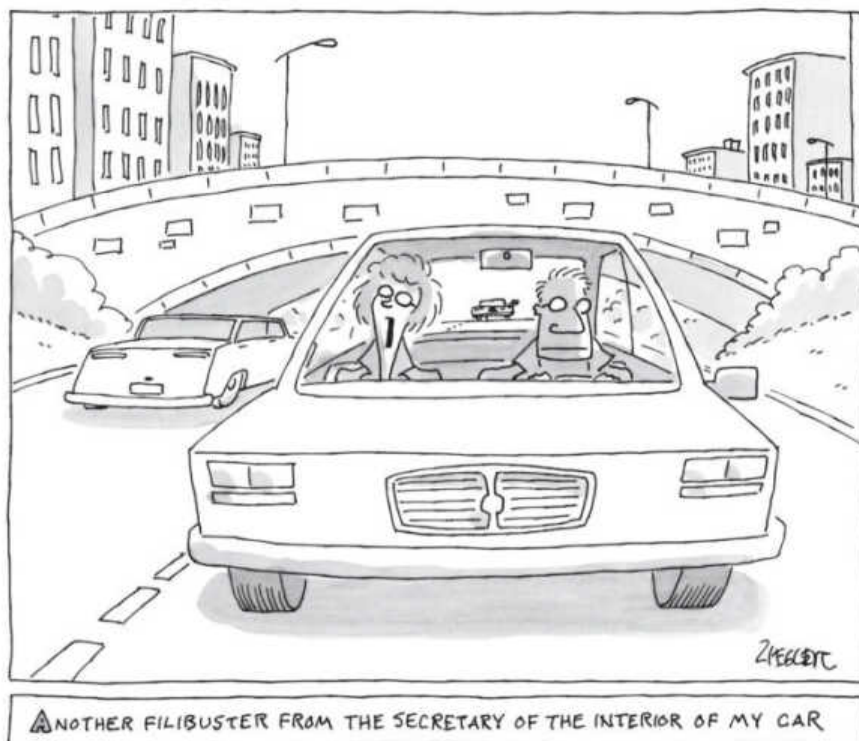
bear witness to the wide experience of being human. There was a tender passion beneath the dispassion.

“Studies, yes,” he wrote in the preface, but “why stories, or cases?” Because, he explained, the understanding of disease cannot be separated from the understanding of the person. They are interwoven, and this has been forgotten in our era of scans, tests, genetics, and procedures. He compared the modern clinical practitioner to the man who mistook his wife for a hat—able to register many details yet still miss the person entirely. “To restore the human subject at the centre—the suffering, afflicted, fighting, human subject—we must deepen a case history to a narrative or tale,” he wrote.

I got to meet Sacks just twice. The first time was in 2002, when, as a surgical resident and a fledgling writer for this magazine, I went to hear him speak at The New Yorker Festival. He had a reputation for being introverted, awkward, but onstage he was warm, funny, and less purely cerebral than I expected. He was the same way when I spoke to him afterward. He’d read my essays, I was surprised to learn, and he asked me about an idea from one that had stuck with him. I don’t remember the subject now. I do remember the shift in me that came from our brief conversation. Up to that point, I’d regarded writing as a lucky sideline to my surgical career and hardly felt like someone who deserved to call himself a writer. But, because Sacks seemed to be holding my work to a higher standard, I realized that I needed to as well.

The second occasion was in March, 2014, when Sacks came to a lecture I was giving at Rockefeller University, in New York. He was eighty then and walked with a cane, but was only physically slowed. During our long conversation afterward, he told me about the memoir he was just finishing, which would be called “On the Move.” I told him about the book on aging and dying that I was finishing. We sent each other our manuscripts and entered into a correspondence.

Later, he learned that a rare cancer, which had been treated nine years earlier, had returned and was spreading



throughout his body. He made the news public this past February, in the *Times*, in the first of four extraordinary essays in which he turned his unflinching powers of observation to his own condition. “Now I am face to face with dying,” he wrote. “The cancer occupies a third of my liver, and though its advance may be slowed, this particular sort of cancer cannot be halted.”

A month later, he sent me a letter. He’d just undergone a catheter procedure that delivered chemotherapy and clot-inducing particles directly into his liver, in the hope of reducing its load of metastases. “I feel awful now, but a little better every day,” he said. He was, as ever, looking forward to getting back to writing, and he managed to keep his writing going right to his final days.

In the last letter I received from him, he admitted to being tempted to think in pessimistic, “even apocalyptic terms.” But he was held back, he said, by the thought of the people who would continue after him: “good scientists, good physicians, etc., who give me hope for the future—a hope one needs very much when one’s own life is close to the end, and the negativities of life seem to darken the horizon.”

Oliver Sacks was like no other cli-

nician, or writer. He was drawn to the homes of the sick, the institutions of the most frail and disabled, the company of the unusual and the “abnormal.” He wanted to see humanity in its many variants and to do so in his own, almost anachronistic way—face to face, over time, away from our burgeoning apparatus of computers and algorithms. And, through his writing, he showed us what he saw.

Sacks had asked me whether I’d read Forster’s “The Machine Stops.” I hadn’t, but his letter prompted me to, and I see why he was so drawn to it. It’s about a world in which individuals live isolated in cells, fearful of self-reliance and direct experience, dependent on plate screens, instant messages, and the ministrations of an all-competent Machine. Yet there is also a boy who, like Sacks, saw what was missing. The boy tells his mother, “The Machine is much, but it is not everything. I see something like you in this plate, but I do not see you. I hear something like you through this telephone, but I do not hear you. That is why I want you to come. Pay me a visit, so that we can meet face to face, and talk about the hopes that are in my mind.”

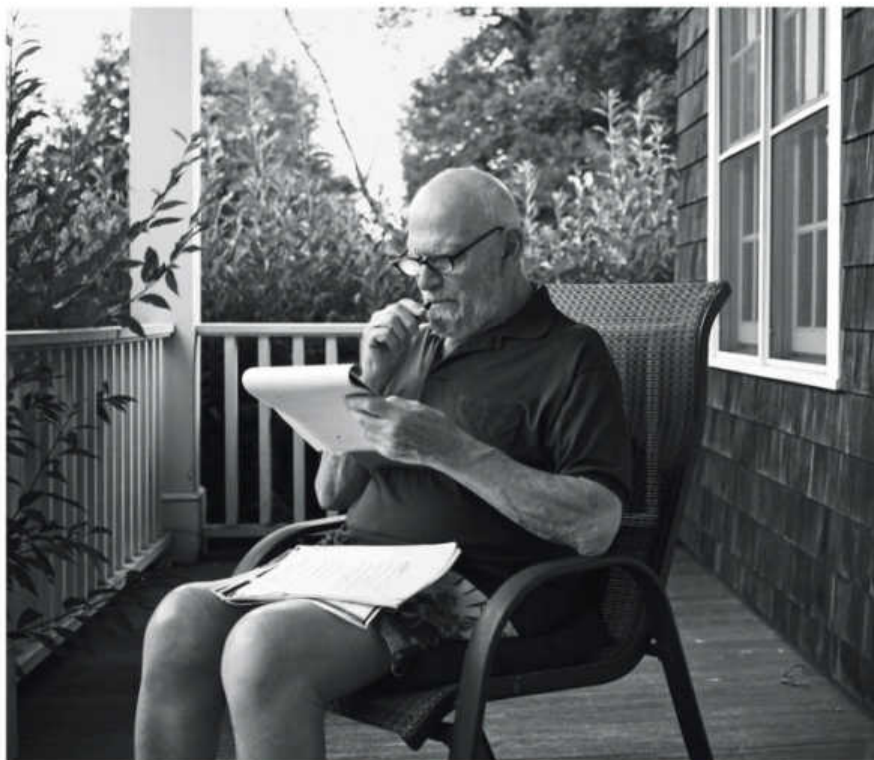
—Atul Gawande



## FILTER FISH

*At life's end, rediscovering the joys of a childhood favorite.*

BY OLIVER SACKS



Gefilte fish is not an everyday dish; it is to be eaten mainly on the Jewish Sabbath in Orthodox households, when cooking is not allowed. When I was growing up, my mother would take off from her surgical duties early on Friday afternoon and devote her time, before the coming of Shabbat, to preparing gefilte fish and other Sabbath dishes.

Our gefilte fish was basically carp, to which pike, whitefish, and sometimes perch or mullet would be added. (The fishmonger delivered the fish alive, swimming in a pail of water.) The fish had to be skinned, boned, and fed into a grinder—we had a massive metal grinder attached to the kitchen table, and my mother would sometimes let me turn the handle. She would then mix the ground fish with raw eggs, matzo meal, and pepper and sugar. (Litvak gefilte fish, I was told, used more pepper, which is how she made it—my father was a Litvak, born in Lithuania.)

My mother would fashion the mixture into balls about two inches in diameter—two to three pounds of fish would allow a dozen or more substantial fish balls—and then poach these gently with a few slices of carrot. As the gefilte fish cooled, a jelly of an extraordinarily delicate sort coalesced, and, as a child, I had a passion for the fish balls and their rich jelly, along with the obligatory *khreyn* (Yiddish for horseradish).

I thought I would never taste anything like my mother's gefilte fish again, but in my forties I found a housekeeper, Helen Jones, with a veritable genius for cooking. Helen improvised everything, nothing was by the book, and, learning my tastes, she decided to try her hand at gefilte fish.

When she arrived each Thursday morning, we would set out for the Bronx to do some shopping together, our first stop being a fish shop on Lydig Avenue run by two Sicilian brothers who were

as like as twins. The fishmongers were happy to give us carp, whitefish, and pike, but I had no idea how Helen, African-American, a good, churchgoing Christian, would manage with making such a Jewish delicacy. But her powers of improvisation were formidable, and she made magnificent gefilte fish (she called it “filter fish”), which, I had to acknowledge, was as good as my mother's. Helen refined her filter fish each time she made it, and my friends and neighbors got a taste for it, too. So did Helen's church friends; I loved to think of her fellow-Baptists gorging on gefilte fish at their church socials.

For my fiftieth birthday, in 1983, she made a gigantic bowl of it—enough for the fifty birthday guests. Among them was Bob Silvers, the editor of *The New York Review of Books*, who was so enamored of Helen's gefilte fish that he wondered if she could make it for his entire staff.

When Helen died, after seventeen years of working for me, I mourned her deeply—and I lost my taste for gefilte fish. Commercially made, bottled gefilte fish, sold in supermarkets, I found detestable compared to Helen's ambrosia.

But now, in what are (barring a miracle) my last weeks of life—so queasy that I am averse to almost every food, with difficulty swallowing anything except liquids or jellylike solids—I have rediscovered the joys of gefilte fish. I cannot eat more than two or three ounces at a time, but an aliquot of gefilte fish every waking hour nourishes me with much needed protein. (Gefilte-fish jelly, like calf's-foot jelly, was always valued as an invalid's food.)

Deliveries now arrive daily from one shop or another: Murray's on Broadway, Russ & Daughters, Sable's, Zabar's, Barney Greengrass, the 2nd Ave Deli—they all make their own gefilte fish, and I like it all (though none compares to my mother's or Helen's).

While I have conscious memories of gefilte fish from about the age of four, I suspect that I acquired my taste for it even earlier, for, with its abundant, nutritious jelly, it was often given to infants in Orthodox households as they moved from baby foods to solid food. Gefilte fish will usher me out of this life, as it ushered me into it, eighty-two years ago. ♦

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# OMISSION

*Choosing what to leave out.*

BY JOHN MCPHEE



At *Time* in the nineteen-fifties, the entry-level job for writers was a column called Miscellany. Filled with one-sentence oddities culled from newspapers and the wire services, Miscellany ran down its third of a page like a ladder, each wee story with its own title—traditionally, and almost invariably, a pun. Writers did not long endure there, and were not meant to, but just after I showed up a hiring freeze shut the door behind me, and I wrote Miscellany for a year and a half. That came to roughly a thousand one-sentence stories, a thousand puns.

I am going to illustrate this with one, and only one, example. A person riding a bicycle on a street in Detroit fell asleep at the handlebars. My title was “Two Tired.”

If a writer were ever to look back on many decades of pun-free prose, Miscellany was a good place to be when you were young. Words are too easy to play on. When I joined *The New Yorker*, in 1965, I left puns behind. Not that I have never suffered a relapse. In the nineteen-seventies, I turned in a manuscript containing a pun so fetid I can’t remember it. My editor then was Robert Bingham, who said, “We should take that out.”

The dialogue that followed became part of a remembrance of him (he died in 1982):

I said, “A person has a right to make a pun once in a while, and even to be a little coarse.” He said, “The line is not on the level of the rest of the piece and therefore seems out of place.”

I said, “That may be, but I want it in there.” He said, “Very well. It’s your piece.” Next day, he said, “I think I ought to tell you I haven’t changed my mind about that. It’s an unfortunate line.” I said, “Listen, Bobby. We discussed that. It’s funny. I want to use it. If I’m embarrassing anybody, I’m embarrassing myself.” He said, “O.K. I just work here.” The day after that, I came in and said to him, “That joke. Let’s take that out. I think that ought to come out.” “Very well,” he said, with no hint of triumph in his eye.

Robert Bingham was my editor for sixteen years. William Shawn, after editing my first two pieces himself, turned me over to Bingham very soon after Bingham came to *The New Yorker* from *The Reporter*, where he had been the managing editor. I was a commuter, and worked more at home than at the magazine. I had not met, seen, or even heard of Bingham when Shawn gave him the manuscript of a forty-thousand-word piece of mine called “Oranges.”

A year earlier, I had asked Mr. Shawn if he thought oranges would be a good subject for a piece of nonfiction writing. In his soft, ferric voice, he said, “Oh.” After a pause, he said, “Oh, yes.” And that was all he said. But it was enough. As a “staff writer,” I was basically an unsalaried freelancer, and I left soon for Florida on his nickel. Why oranges? There was a machine in Pennsylvania Station that cut and squeezed them. I stopped there as routinely as an animal at a salt lick. Across the winter months, I thought I noticed a change in the color of the juice, light to deep, and I had also seen an ad somewhere that showed what appeared to be four identical oranges, although each had a different name. My intention in Florida was to find out why, and write a piece that would probably be short for *New Yorker* nonfiction of that day—something under ten thousand words. In Polk County, at Lake Alfred, though, I happened into the University of Florida’s Citrus Experiment Station, five buildings isolated within vast surrounding groves. Several dozen people in those buildings had Ph.D.s in oranges, and there was a citrus library of a hundred thousand titles—scientific papers, mainly, and doctoral dissertations, and six thousand books. Then and there, my project magnified. Back home, and many months later, I sent in the manuscript. Mr. Shawn accepted it, indicating gently that it might need a

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little squeezing itself before publication.

Mr. Shawn seems to have instructed Mr. Bingham to hunt for a few galley's worth of information and throw the rest away. At any rate, what reached me in New Jersey was more than shocking, let me tell you. The envelope was large but thinner than a postcard. After glancing through Bingham's condensation, I called the office, asked if I could see Mr. Shawn, got on a train, and went to the city. Shawn was even smaller than I am, which is getting down there, but after going past his moats and entering his presence you were looking across a desk at an intimidating sovereign. Pathetically, I blurted out, "Mr. Bingham has removed eighty-five per cent of what I wrote?"

Shawn (incredulous, innocent, saucer-eyed): "He has?"

I responded affirmatively.

He said perhaps I should have a conversation with Mr. Bingham. He would arrange it. Mary Painter, his quiet Cerberus, would be in touch with me.

Five days later, I returned to the city to meet Mr. Bingham. I remember hating him as I drank my juice in Penn Station. In Florida, in orange-juice-concentrate plants, there was a machine, made by the Food Machinery Corporation, called the short-form extractor. I thought of Bingham as the short-form extractor, and would call him that from time to time for years. He came down the hall to an office I had at the magazine, in a row of writers' tiny spaces that one writer called Sleepy Hollow. This man who came through my doorway was agreeable-looking, actually handsome, with a bright-blue gaze, an oscillating bow tie, curly light-brown hair, and a sincere mustache—an instantly likable guy if the instant had not been this one. He said he was not sure how to begin our conversation, but he wondered if I would prefer to add things back to the proof that was sent to me or start with the original manuscript and talk about what might be left out.

He talked with me for five days. Enough of the manuscript was restored to make a serial publication that ran in two issues, but by no means all of it was restored. Citrus is citrus first and Sweet Orange of Valencia or Washington Navel second. The sex life of citrus is spectacular. Plant a lime seed and up comes a kumquat, or, with equal odds, a Seville

orange, not to mention a rough lemon or a tangerine. "Character Differences in Seedlings of the Persian Lime" was the title of the scientific paper that described all that—a perfect title for anyone's seven-hundred-page family history, and one item among many that expanded my manuscript to the size it reached as themes spread into related themes.

Writing is selection. Just to start a piece of writing you have to choose one word and only one from more than a million in the language. Now keep going. What is your next word? Your next sentence, paragraph, section, chapter? Your next ball of fact. You select what goes in and you decide what stays out. At base you have only one criterion: If something interests you, it goes in—if not, it stays out. That's a crude way to assess things, but it's all you've got. Forget market research. Never market-research your writing. Write on subjects in which you have enough interest on your own to see you through all the stops, starts, hesitations, and other impediments along the way.

Ideally, a piece of writing should grow to whatever length is sustained by its selected material—that much and no more. Many, if not most, of my projects have begun as ideas for *The New Yorker's* section called The Talk of the Town, and many of them have grown to greater length. In the nineteen-seventies, observing the trials of an experimental aircraft, I intended at first to tell the story in a thousand words, but the tests and trials



increased in number, changed, went on for years; a rich stream of characters happened through the scene; and the unfolding story had a natural structure analogous to a dramatic plot. The ultimate piece ran at fifty-five thousand words in three consecutive issues of the magazine. "Oranges," seven years earlier, had grown in the same way, but my aptitude for selection needed growing, too. Bingham, after restoring much of what he had cut (and suggesting to Shawn that what we

were doing made sense), insisted that substantial amounts of text remain down and out. Even I could see that for magazine purposes he was right. Four or five months later, as the piece was being prepared for publication as a book, I asked my close friend Mr. Bingham to help me choose from the original manuscript what else to restore, and what not to restore, to the text. In other words, the library at the Citrus Experiment Station had beguiled me so much—not to mention the citrus scientists, the growers, the rich kings of juice concentration—that I lost the advantage of what is left out.

Anne Fadiman, whose 1997 book, "The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures," won the National Book Critics Circle Award and is a demonstration of the potentialities of nonfiction writing, teaches her craft at Yale. Some years ago, she e-mailed various writers she knew asking each if he or she would answer just a single question if it was asked by one of her students. Who could refuse that? I have been writing replies to her students ever since, most recently to Minami Funakoshi, whose question had to do with my book "The Pine Barrens" and a couple of people in a tarpaper shanty. Minami said, "You have many quotes in the story that capture Fred and Bill's voices and personalities as well. Some of my favorites are: 'Come in. Come in. Come on the hell in' and 'I didn't paper this year. . . . For the last couple months, I've had sinus.' I was curious—do you know right away when you hear a quote you want to include in the story, or do you usually mine for it through your notes?"

Dear Minami—Across my years as a writer and a writing teacher, I have been asked myriad questions about the reporting and compositional process but not before now this basic one of yours. And the answer comes forth without a moment's contemplation: I know right away when I hear a quote I'll want to include in the story. . . . In interviews, I scribble and scribble, gathering impressions, observations, information, and quotes, but not altogether mindlessly. Writing is selection. From the first word of the first sentence in an actual composition, the writer is choosing, selecting, and deciding (most importantly) what to leave out. In a broader, less efficient way, that is what goes on during the scribbling of interview notes. I jot down everything that strikes me as having any potentiality whatever to be useful in the future

# How to Cover Up the Pesticide Industry's GMO Scheme and New 2,4 D "Agent Orange" Crops

## SLATE'S WILLIAM SALETAN SHOWS HOW IT'S DONE

DAVID BRONNER CEO, Dr. Bronner's

There's been no shortage of journalists of late flacking for the pesticide and junk food industries regarding genetically engineered foods, aka Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). This coincides with the massive industry PR push behind the Safe and Affordable Food Labeling (SAFE) Act, ie. the Deny Americans the Right to Know (DARK) Act, which will stop states from requiring disclosure of GMO foods. Easily fooled and blind to their bias, these journalists focus on irrational or fringe elements in the movement to label GMO foods, celebrate commercially insignificant examples of

*to take you backstage, behind those blanket assurances about the safety of genetic engineering. I want to take you down into the details of four GMO fights, because that's where you'll find truth. You'll come to the last curtain, the one that hides the reality of the anti-GMO movement. And you'll see what's behind it."*

He then spends 5,000 plus words discussing genetically engineered virus-resistant papaya that represents less than 0.001% of GMO crop acreage worldwide, and beta-carotene-enriched genetically engineered rice that represents exactly zero percent. Only at the end of the article does Saletan devote any attention to the real concern driving the modern GMO labeling movement: that pesticide companies are engineering major food

are banned in the EU due to their killing power on bees, pollinators and other non-target wildlife. (See former EPA Senior Scientist Dr. Ray Seidler's "Pesticide Use on Genetically Engineered Crops.")

Up until 2011 I myself was a sucker for industry-fed propaganda served up by the likes of Saletan, that GMOs were mostly nutrient-enriched drought-tolerant yield-boosted crops that require less pesticides. But then the government deregulated "Round-Up Ready Alfalfa" and the charade was over: GMOs are about chemical companies engineering crops to tolerate huge doses of the weed killer they sell. Alfalfa isn't even generally sprayed with herbicide in the first place. A huge swath of the American public woke up to the fact that GMOs are really about pesticide companies selling pesticides, and the modern GMO labeling movement was born. Commercially insignificant GMOs like GMO papayas, rice, apples and potatoes are red herring distractions and not the issue. Herbicide-tolerant 2,4 D & Glyphosate food crops are what's for dinner and should be Exhibit A when discussing labeling GMOs. And regardless of potential risks, just as consumers have a right to know if orange juice is from concentrate or if vanilla is artificial, they have a right to know if food has been genetically engineered.

Journalists covering science, agriculture and food need to wake up to the influence and track record of the pesticide and junk food industries, and stand up for the public interest. These industries are desperately trying to force the DARK Act through Congress. This bill would pre-empt citizens' rights to enact mandatory GMO labeling, and its backers are counting on clueless journalists to help them do it. But hopefully our elected representatives will stand up for our simple right to know if our food is engineered to be saturated in toxic herbicide—a right citizens in 64 other countries already have.

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## Journalists covering science, agriculture and food need to wake up to the influence and track record of the pesticide and junk food industries, and stand up for the public interest.

GMOs, and cover up that over 90% of GMO food acreage is engineered by chemical companies to survive huge doses of weed killer. Rather than sound the alarm that the pesticide industry's new 2,4 D herbicide-tolerant GMO crops were recently greenlighted for planting this spring by industry-friendly regulators, these journalists bury the fact they are destined for our dinner plates this fall.

William Saletan of Slate, prominent spoon-fed banger of drums in support of war in Iraq, recently stepped up to show fellow media lackeys how best to swallow and regurgitate pesticide and junk food talking points on GMOs, and advised Americans they don't need to know what they eat and feed their families. In his article, "Unhealthy Fixation" Saletan states:

*"If you're like me, you don't really want to wade into this issue. It's too big, technical, and confusing. But come with me, just this once. I want*

crops to survive huge volumes of the toxic weed killers they sell. And even then he lays down pesticide industry spin that Glyphosate—the main herbicide GMOs are engineered to tolerate whose use has skyrocketed on food—is "safer," even though the World Health Organization determined earlier this year that Glyphosate is a "probable carcinogen" (which he alludes to only by hyperlink without explicitly stating and interfering with his argument.) Even more egregiously, he fails to state that the pesticide industry's next generation "stacked" herbicide-tolerant GMO crops also tolerate huge amounts of 2,4 D, an older toxic herbicide that composed one-half of the dioxin-contaminated defoliant Agent Orange.

Saletan also blithely asserts that genetically engineered Bt insecticide in GMO corn has led to a reduction of insecticide use, failing to mention that use of systemic neonicotinoid insecticides on GMO corn has skyrocketed from zero to almost 100% in the past twelve years—insecticides which



composition, and since I am learning on the job and don't know what the piece will be like, I scoop up, say, ten times as much stuff as I'll ultimately use. But when Fred Brown says "Come in. Come in. Come on the hell in," I come in, sit down, and soon jot the line. I don't have to be Nostradamus to sense that his form of greeting will be useful, any more than I could resist his remark about papering and his sinuses. Factual writing is also a kind of treasure hunt, and when the nuggets come along you know what they are. They often provide beginnings and endings, even titles. In interior Alaska, non-native people often describe one another in terms of when they "came into the country." That phrase is repeated so much it is almost a litany, and I heard it so often that I had a title for "Coming Into the Country" long before any of it was written. That was lucky and rare, because titles are usually very hard to choose.

**A**mong the three or four dozen pieces that Woody Allen has contributed to *The New Yorker*, the first one seemed to his editor, Roger Angell, to contain an overabundance of funny lines. He told Allen that even if the jokes were individually hilarious they tended cumulatively to diminish the net effect. He said he thought the humor would be improved if Allen were to leave some of them out.

Sculptors address the deletion of material in their own analogous way. Michelangelo: "The more the marble wastes, the more the statue grows." Michelangelo: "Every block of stone has a statue inside it, and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it." Michelangelo, loosely, as we can imagine him with six tons of Carrara marble, a mallet, a point chisel, a pitching tool, a tooth chisel, a claw chisel, rasps, rifflers, and a bush hammer: "I'm just taking away what doesn't belong there."

And inevitably we have come to Ernest Hemingway and the tip of the iceberg—or, how to fashion critical theory from one of the world's most venerable clichés. "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water." The two sentences are from "Death in the Afternoon," a nonfiction book (1932). They apply as readily to fiction. Hemingway sometimes called the concept the Theory of Omission. In 1958, in an "Art of

## DESTINATION

As we rode into the village we came upon  
a convergence of old customs: there was  
an empty house and the door stood wide open.

The men from the village lugged a cupboard into the house.  
The men from the village hauled a table into the house.  
The men from the village heaved a bed into the house.

And the women of the village bore  
dishes and plates and glasses and something to  
make the bed habitable into the house.

Then the men pushed a son inside.  
Learn to light a fire, they said,  
learn to put out a fire, they said,  
we're latching the shutters.

Then the women pushed a daughter inside.  
Learn to be hot, they said,  
learn to be cold, they said,  
we're barricading the door.

—Hester Knibbe

(Translated, from the Dutch, by Jacquelyn Pope.)

Fiction" interview for *The Paris Review*, he said to George Plimpton, "Anything you know you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg." To illustrate, he said, "I've seen the marlin mate and know about that. So I leave that out. I've seen a school (or pod) of more than fifty sperm whales in that same stretch of water and once harpooned one nearly sixty feet in length and lost him. So I left that out. All the stories I know from the fishing village I leave out. But the knowledge is what makes the underwater part of the iceberg."

In other words:

There are known knowns—there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns. That is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't know.

Yes, the influence of Ernest Hemingway evidently extended to the Pentagon.

Be that as it might not be, Ernest Hemingway's Theory of Omission seems to me to be saying to writers, "Back off. Let the reader do the creating." To cause a reader to see in her mind's eye an entire autumnal landscape, for example, a

writer needs to deliver only a few words and images—such as corn shocks, pheasants, and an early frost. The creative writer leaves white space between chapters or segments of chapters. The creative reader silently articulates the unwritten thought that is present in the white space. Let the reader have the experience. Leave judgment in the eye of the beholder. When you are deciding what to leave out, begin with the author. If you see yourself prancing around between subject and reader, get lost. Give elbow room to the creative reader. In other words, to the extent that this is all about you, leave that out.

Creative nonfiction is a term that is currently having its day. When I was in college, anyone who put those two words together would have been looked on as a comedian or a fool. Today, Creative Nonfiction is the name of the college course I teach. Same college. Required to give the course a title, I named it for a quarterly edited and published by Lee Gutkind, then at the University of Pittsburgh. The title asks an obvious question: What is creative about nonfiction? It takes a whole semester to try to answer that, but here are a few points: The

creativity lies in what you choose to write about, how you go about doing it, the arrangement through which you present things, the skill and the touch with which you describe people and succeed in developing them as characters, the rhythms of your prose, the integrity of the composition, the anatomy of the piece (does it get up and walk around on its own?), the extent to which you see and tell the story that exists in your material, and so forth. Creative nonfiction is not making something up but making the most of what you have.

When I worked at *Time*, after at last escaping Miscellany I wrote for five years in a back-of-the-book section called Show Business. In a typical week, the section consisted of three or four short pieces probably averaging nine hundred words. After you finished a piece, it entered the system in a pneumatic tube. When you next saw it, it bore the initials of your senior editor. It also had his [sic] revisions on it. You left your cubicle, paper in hand, went to the senior editor's office, and, in a mealy way, complained. Revisions might ensue. The piece then went to the managing editor, whose initials usually joined the senior editor's without ado, but not always. At last, with both sets of initials intact, the piece went to a department called Makeup, whose personnel could have worked as floral arrangers, because *Time* in those days, unlike its rival *Newsweek*, never assigned a given length but waited for the finished story before fitting it into the magazine.

After four days of preparation and writing—after routinely staying up almost all night on the fourth night—and after tailoring your stories past the requests, demands, fine tips, and incomprehensible suggestions of the M.E. and your senior editor, you came in on Day 5 and were greeted by galleys from Makeup with notes on them that said “Green 5” or “Green 8” or “Green 15” or some such, telling you to condense the text by that number of lines or the piece would not fit in the magazine. You were supposed to use a green pencil so Makeup would know what could be put back, if it came to that. I can't remember it coming to that.

Groan as much as you liked, you had to green nearly all your pieces, and green-

ing was a craft in itself—studying your completed and approved product, your “finished” piece, to see what could be left out. In fifty years, *The New Yorker's* makeup department has asked me only once to remove some lines so a piece would fit. *The New Yorker* has the flexibility of spot drawings to include or leave out, and cartoons of varying and variable dimensions, and poems that can be there or not be there. Things fit, even if some things have to wait a week or two, or six months. Greening has stayed with me, though, because for four decades I have inflicted it on my college writing students, handing them nine or ten swatches of photocopied prose, each marked “Green 3” or “Green 4” or whatever.

Green 4 does not mean lop off four lines at the bottom, I tell them. The idea is to remove words in such a manner that no one would notice that anything has been removed. Easier with some writers than with others. It's as if you were removing freight cars here and there in order to shorten a train—or pruning bits and pieces of a plant for reasons of aesthetics or plant pathology, not to mention size. Do not do violence to the author's tone, manner, nature, style, thumbprint. Measure cumulatively the fragments you remove and see how many lines would be gone if the prose were reformatted. If you kill a widow, you pick up a whole line.

I give them thirty-two lines of Joseph Conrad “going up that river . . . like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings.” Green 3, if you dare. I give them Thomas McGuane's ode to the tarpon as grand piano (twenty lines, Green 3), Irving Stone's passionate declaration of his love of stone (nine lines, Green 1), Philip Roth's character Lonoff the novelist describing the metronomic boredom of the writing process in prose that metronomically repeats itself to make its point (try greening that), twenty-five lines, Green 3. I ask them to look up the first three pieces they have written for the course, to choose the one they preferred working on, then green ten per cent. And I give them the whole of the Gettysburg Address (twenty-five lines, Green 3). Memorization and familiarity have made that difficult, yes, but scarcely impossible. For example, if you green the latter part of sentence 9 and

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the first part of sentence 10, you can attach the head of 9 to the long tail of 10 and pick up twenty-four words, nine per cent of Abraham Lincoln's famously compact composition:

9. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here

10. to the great task remaining before us . . .

At *Time*, Calvin Trillin was a colleague, as he has been throughout my years with *The New Yorker*. In a piece for *The New Yorker's* Web site, he wrote about his own memories of greening and the lessons it imparted:

I don't have any interest in word games—I don't think I've ever done a crossword or played Scrabble—but I found greening a thoroughly enjoyable puzzle. I was surprised that what I had thought of as a tightly constructed seventy-line story—a story so tightly constructed that it had resisted the inclusion of that maddening leftover fact—was unharmed, or even improved, by greening ten per cent of it. The greening I did in *Time* Edit convinced me that just about any piece I write could be improved if, when it was supposedly ready to hand in, I looked in the mirror and said sternly to myself "Green fourteen" or "Green eight." And one of these days I'm going to begin doing that.

Aaron Shekey, an app designer out of Dane County, Wisconsin—a rock composer and bandleader, too—works in Minneapolis now, but is more than evidently nostalgic for the arresting silhouette of his boyhood city. Madison, the Wisconsin capital, stands on a morainial isthmus between two glacial lakes, which are not small. The hotels, office buildings, and apartment complexes of central Madison rise no more than a hundred and ninety feet, forming an accordant skyline. On his Web site, not long ago, Shekey described it in a short essay, called "It's What You Leave Out." Only the dome of the capitol of Wisconsin projects above all other structures. It's like El Greco's Toledo but without the exaggeration. It's as striking as Mont-Saint-Michel. How has that come to be? In 1915, while the building was under construction, the City of Madison decreed that no new structure could rise higher than the base of the dome and the Corinthian columns of the capitol's façade. No variance has ever been granted. The scene is spectacular across water. Shekey the

musician closes with a quote from the script of the movie "Almost Famous": "It's not what you put into it. It's what you leave out. . . . Yeah, that's rock n' roll."

Or, in the words of the literary critic Harold Bloom, writing on Shakespeare: "Increasingly in his work, what he leaves out becomes much more important than what he puts in, and so he takes literature beyond its limits."

When I was a sophomore in college, I went to Scarsdale, New York, a few days before Christmas to visit a roommate named Louis Marx. In the nineteen-twenties, his father—also named Louis Marx—and his uncle David Marx had founded Louis Marx and Company, maker of toys. Now, in 1950, it was, as Louis, Sr., seemed to enjoy saying, "the biggest toy company in the world—bigger than Lionel and Gilbert put together." Having grown up making architectural structures from A.C. Gilbert Erector sets, and with Lionel O-gauge streamliners running all over my attic, I was much impressed. On various occasions in Scarsdale, I had also been much impressed by the sorts of people who dropped in at the Marx house—General Omar Bradley, for example, and General Curtis LeMay, and General Walter Bedell Smith. This was five years after the end of the Second World War, in which Omar Bradley, five stars, supervised the invasion of Germany, and Walter Bedell Smith, four stars, was the chief of staff, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, and Curtis LeMay, U.S.A.F., four stars, organized the bombing of Japan. Marx toys were inventive windup machines—little tinplate tanks, cars, fire engines, boats, a fourteen-and-a-half-inch G-man pursuit car—logoed with a large "X" over the letters "M A R." Like his son, Louis, Jr., Louis, Sr., was a swift quipper, and I loved just listening to him talk. I had to be in New York City later on this particular day, and Louis, Sr., offered me a ride, saying that he had an errand there, too. I said goodbye to my contemporaries (I had dated one of my roommate's sisters) and went down the driveway in a chauffeur-driven town car with his father and stepmother.

So this is the situation: Two-thirds of a century later, I am describing that ride to New York City in an article on the

writing process that is focussed on the principle of leaving things out. I am with Mr. and Mrs. Monarch of Toys, whose friends a few years ago led various forms of the invasion of Europe. Do I leave that out? Help! Should I omit the lemony look on General Smith's face the day he showed up late for lunch after his stomach was pumped? I am writing this, not reading it, and I don't know what to retain and what to reject. The monarchical remark on being greater than the sum of Lionel and Gilbert—do I leave that out? I once saw Mr. Marx toss a broiled steak onto a rug so his bulldog could eat it. How relevant is that? Do I leave that out? Will it offend his survivors? In a recent year, his great-granddaughter was a sophomore in my college writing course. Her name was Barnett, not Marx. I did not know her beforehand, and had not even learned that my old roommate's grandniece was at Princeton when her application for a place in the course came in. "You gave my grandmother her first kiss," it began. How relevant is that? Should I cut that out? Mrs. Marx—Idella, stepmother of my roommate—was rumored among us Princeton sophomores of the time to be the sister of Lili St. Cyr. In the twenty-first century, in whose frame of reference is the strip dancer Lili St. Cyr? Better to exclude that? Best to exclude that Idella danced, too? This is about what you leave out, not what you take off. Writing is selection.

A glass partition separated the chauffeur from his passengers, sound-proofing our conversation. Mr. Marx said the driver was new. Chauffeurs are good for about six months, he said. For two months, they are learning to work for you. Then for two months they are excellent. Then they start to steal from you, and two months later you fire them. Please! How much of this is germane? The car, meanwhile, has slid down the Hutchinson River Parkway and turned west on the Cross County Parkway and south on the Saw Mill and the Henry Hudson Parkway to the city. It exits at 125th Street and before long draws up at 60 Morningside Drive. Until this moment, I have had no idea where Mr. and Mrs. Marx are going. At 60 Morningside, Mr. Marx asks me if, before I continue on my way downtown (by subway), I would like to meet General Eisenhower. This was President's House, Colum-

bia University, and Eisenhower was the eponymous resident. Inside, under a high ceiling, was a large, lighted Christmas tree, the Eisenhower family milling around. Soon after we had all been introduced, Mr. Marx and General Eisenhower moved toward an elevator that would take them to the highest of six floors, where Ike had a studio in which he painted. The purpose of Mr. Marx's visit, it became clear, was for him to choose one of Ike's paintings, which Ike would give him as a gift. Merry Christmas. Mrs. Marx stayed downstairs with Mrs. Eisenhower. Mr. Marx and the General told me to come along with them. The three of us ascended to the studio—a spacious attic awash in natural light. Ike had lined up half a dozen finished pictures for Mr. Marx to consider. Near them, on an easel in the center of the room, was Ike's current project, an unfinished still-life. The subject was a square table covered with a red-checked tablecloth and a bowl of fruit—apples, plums, and pears, topped by a bunch of grapes. After studying for a time the paintings from which he was to choose, Mr. Marx said that he needed to pee. He would choose, eventually and shrewdly, a large canvas of the principal buildings of the United States Military Academy from across the parade ground. Meanwhile, Ike told him where he could find a bathroom on a lower floor. Mr. Marx went to the elevator and disappeared.

Now General Eisenhower and I were alone in his studio. What on earth to say—with those five stars in pentimento on his shoulders, me a nineteen-year-old college student. The problem was more his than mine, but for him it was not a problem. He began to talk about the red-checked tablecloth and bowl of fruit. He said that when he was growing up in Abilene, Kansas, his world was symbolized by tablecloths just like this one, and that was why this current project meant so much to him. The still-life was well along—the apples, plums, and pears deftly drawn and highlighted. Pretty much tongue-tied until now, at last I had something to ask. Despite the painting's advanced stage, it did not include the grapes.

I said, "Why have you left out the grapes?"

Ike said, "Because they're too God-damned hard to paint." ♦

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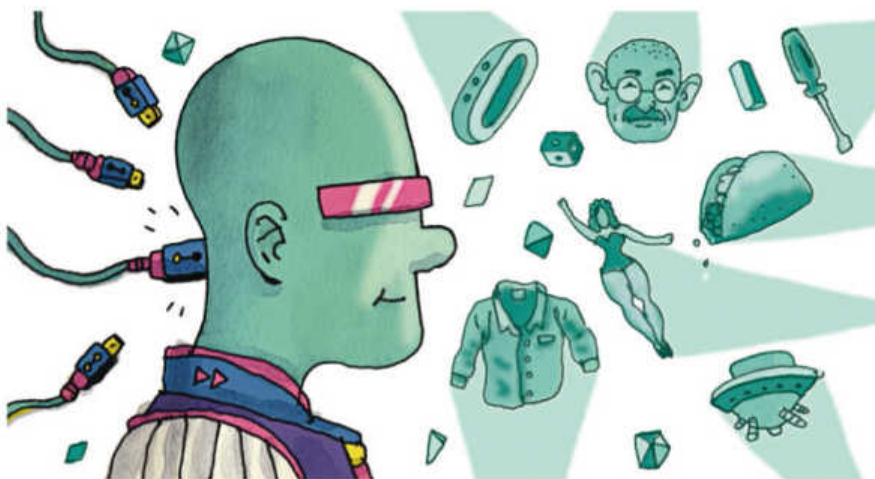


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# EIGHT SHORT SCIENCE-FICTION STORIES

BY PAUL SIMMS



**"IS THE MOON GETTING** bigger and bigger?" my three-year-old asked, surveying the horizon.

"No, honey," I chuckled. "That's an optical illusion caused by how close it is to the horizon."

But then I turned and looked.

**"PLEASE," THE ROBOT BEGGED.**

"Please kill me." The robot began to weep.

"Please kill me," it pleaded. "And use my parts to make yourself a proper reading lamp. It just tears me up inside to see you trying to read by the insufficient light of that dim lamp next to the toilet."

I tried to ignore its pleas, but in my heart I knew it was right.

**"WHY DON'T YOU** come up and see me sometime?" the holographic re-creation of Mae West said, as she uncrossed her legs and flashed us her bare beaver.

My mother looked away, troubled. "Is this really the proper use of the technology?" she said.

"Come on, lady—nobody would have loved this more than Mae herself," the hologram of Mahatma Gandhi said. "And don't forget: the Bacon Club Chalupa is at Taco Bell for a limited time only."

**"FOR FIVE HUNDRED** credits, I'll tell you his whereabouts," the bounty hunter hissed. "For a thousand credits, I'll kill him myself."

The offer hung in the air, and Kurdt LaRock pondered it, savoring the possibilities. When he finally spoke, both men knew that the decision had already been made.

"A thousand credits, huh?" LaRock drawled. "How much is that in dollars?"

The bounty hunter took out his calculator, and they got down to business.

**THE GENE-SPLICERS** had tinkered with the DNA, producing a race of warriors who craved just two things: the thrill of battle and the taste of their own feet. They hungered for battle. They literally ate their own feet. None survived to reproduce, and within a few short years they were all gone.

The Gene-Splicers chalked it up to experience, and decided to try harder the next time.

**THE PRESIDENT WHAMMED** his fist on the table. The Cabinet Room went silent.

"This isn't some goddam B movie, gentlemen," he said. "This is real life."

The scientist looked at the floor.

"We have the smartest minds in the world working on this," the President continued. "The top biologists and astronomers and geneticists. And you're telling me that the closest anyone can come to identifying this . . . thing is . . ."

"I'm afraid so, Mr. President," the scientist said. "What we're dealing with here is the Flying Penis from Venus."

The Treasury Secretary giggled, and the chief of staff did his best to not join in. But a look from the President silenced them.

"This . . . thing," the President said. "This creature, this—"

"Flying Penis from Venus," the scientist said.

The President burst out laughing, and the rest of the room joined him, relieved to release their pent-up mirth.

"I suppose it is kind of funny," the President said, "in that it's so improbable. But come on, guys—it's already killed forty thousand people, so we really have to focus here."

**THE GALACTIC FEDERATION** had rejected the Treaty of Agreement. The Outliers had withdrawn their negotiating squadron, despite the best efforts of the Trade Council. And in the Unoccupied Sector a call arose for punishing tariffs on intersystem trade.

Engineer Wilson didn't know what any of this meant, but he knew that it probably wasn't good. After two more commercial breaks, the news ticker began to repeat itself, so he turned off his TV and went back to sleep.

**HE'D HAD A REAL NAME** at one time, but even he'd forgotten it. On the Net, he was known as Captain Fantastic, the Brown Dirt Cowboy—or CFTBDC69, in Net-handle speak.

He plugged the jack into the shiny port in the back of his neck and pressed Enter.

Twenty-six hundred baud of digital packetry surged through his system, and once the nausea—and the euphoria—wore off, he came to and ordered three polo shirts from jcrew.com without even touching his keyboard.

"If this is the future," he said to himself, "me likey." ♦

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LETTER FROM THE VATICAN

# HOLY ORDERS

*A determined Pope Francis moves to reform a recalcitrant Curia.*

BY ALEXANDER STILLE



*Francis conducting a papal audience at the Vatican last month. By deploying his modest personality and inclusive rhetoric, he has created*





*the impression of a much more open and inclusive Church without actually changing Church doctrine.*



When you walk in the back entrance to Vatican City, you quickly realize what a small world the center of the Catholic Church is. The hundred-and-nine-acre complex, built largely during the Renaissance, is the spiritual and administrative headquarters of a global institution with 1.2 billion followers. The first building you see is the Santa Marta guesthouse, where Pope Francis lives and works, in a three-room space of some seven hundred square feet, rather than in the traditional, and grander, papal apartments, in the Apostolic Palace.

As you turn a corner, there is a yellow building that houses several cardinals. On one floor is Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, who was Secretary of State under Francis's predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI. Cardinal Paolo Sardi, considered to be one of Bertone's political adversaries within the Curia, occupies the floor just below. A short stroll through the Vatican gardens takes you to the Mater Ecclesiae monastery, where Benedict XVI now lives. When he resigned, in 2013, he flew off in a helicopter to begin a life of retreat and prayer, and many might have thought that he had retired to a monastery somewhere in his native Germany. But he is right here. Just outside the Vatican walls, in Piazza della Città Leonina, there is

another apartment building filled with cardinals. Cardinal Gerhard Müller, Benedict's successor as the Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, lives in the apartment occupied by Benedict when he was merely Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, and above him is Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri.

The neighbors have been feuding: Müller is a defender of doctrinal orthodoxy, while the reform-minded Baldisseri has presided over the Synod on the Family, a council meeting initiated by Francis last year, at which Church progressives have advocated greater flexibility on such matters as the treatment of divorced couples and homosexuals. There has been an ongoing dispute—now, apparently, resolved—over the noise level in the building: Baldisseri, an accomplished pianist, likes to practice after lunch, when Müller takes a nap.

In this compacted world, close friendships, intense rivalries, clashing ambitions, and personal enmities all flourish. Perhaps because members of the Church rarely criticize the Pope publicly, personal differences often take the form of backbiting, corridor gossip, and behind-the-scenes intrigue. It is in this peculiar setting that Pope Francis, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the former Archbishop of Buenos Aires, finds himself attempting to “shake up” the Catholic Church,

as he likes to say. Unlike most of his predecessors, he had spent little time in Rome before his election, on March 13, 2013.

The first Jesuit Pope in history, Bergoglio spent virtually his entire career in Latin America. At thirty-six, he became head of the Jesuit order in Argentina. During the Dirty War carried out by the country's right-wing junta, he was accused of handing over to the military two priests, but the evidence is ambiguous, and he has argued that he worked to free the priests and other victims of the regime. (Some political dissidents have testified that Bergoglio helped hide them during the persecutions.) After he was named Archbishop of Buenos Aires, in 1998, Bergoglio began to dedicate himself to the poor, travelling by bus through Buenos Aires and spending time in the city's shantytowns.

When Cardinal Bergoglio came to Rome in 2013, for the gathering that would choose Benedict's successor, he addressed a group of cardinals before the conclave got under way. He briskly criticized the Rome-centered Church's “self-referential” tendency toward “theological narcissism” when it should be reaching out to the periphery of the world, and to the most marginal members of society. Just before Christmas last year, Francis surprised an audience of cardinals and Monsignors by denouncing the various “diseases” of the Curia—its “pathology of power,” its “rivalry and vainglory,” its “gossiping, grumbling, and backbiting,” its “idolizing of superiors,” its “careerism and opportunism.” Although he has introduced some new people into the Vatican government to carry out his vision for the Church, for the most part he must work with the singular community that he inherited.

I got a glimpse of how difficult that might be when I attended a gathering of high-level Vatican officials in Rome earlier this year and overheard a cardinal talking about how *L'Espresso*, an Italian news magazine, would soon be publishing a damaging exposé of the free-spending ways of Cardinal George Pell, the Australian whom Francis brought in to clean up the Vatican's finances. The article was based on leaked documents, and the cardinal was clearly pleased with its imminent publication. “When Francis came in, the attitude



*“Just remember, sweetie—fight the biggest one first.”*

was that everything that the Italians did was bad and corrupt—now it is a little more complicated,” he said. He felt that it was important to settle accounts with those he viewed as “pseudo-reformers.”

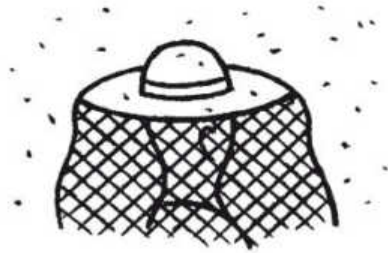
Toward late afternoon, the Swiss Guards who stand sentinel at the Vatican clear out any straggling visitors in the gardens for the moment when the Pope emeritus, Benedict XVI, takes his daily stroll. Benedict uses a walker to move around but by all accounts is in good mental health. Now that he can no longer be blamed for everything that goes wrong in the Catholic world, his papacy is undergoing something of a reassessment.

Benedict does not give press interviews; most news about his life is filtered through his personal secretary, Monsignor Georg Gänswein, a German theologian who began working with him in 1996 and became his secretary in 2003. Gänswein also lives at the Mater Ecclesiae. He is frequently referred to as Gorgeous George, or as the George Clooney of the Vatican. A dashing man of fifty-nine, he has graying blond hair, chiselled features, and penetrating blue eyes. He has been an avid tennis player and skier. Dressed in an elegant black cassock, he received me in a frescoed room in the Apostolic Palace. Shortly before Benedict resigned, he elevated Gänswein to the rank of archbishop and made him Prefect of the Papal Household, a position that he has retained under Francis.

Some of Francis’s first moves—his decision not to live in the Apostolic Palace, and not to wear some of the regal papal vestments—were viewed in certain quarters as subtle rebukes of Benedict, a scrupulous observer of papal traditions and dress. In a slightly irritated tone, Monsignor Gänswein explained to the German newspaper *Die Zeit* that Pope Benedict did not live in the Apostolic Palace out of egotism, and that he had very modest, sober habits. Gänswein seemed to bristle at the wave of Francis-mania that swept the world after his election. The Pope, he said, cannot be “everybody’s darling,” and the media infatuation with him would fade. He told me that the Pope was like a finger pointing to the moon, the moon being God. “Sometimes this gets turned up-

side down, and all people see is the finger—they don’t see the moon,” he said. “Not that this is what the Pope wants—the Pope is not a pop star—and not that Francis is trying to draw attention to himself, but the mass media have their own dynamic.”

Benedict’s relations with the media were less charmed. At first, many reporters explored his life during the Second World War and his reputation for



theological rigidity and conservatism. He never quite shook the reputation that he acquired as John Paul II’s enforcer of doctrinal orthodoxy, a reputation that had earned him the nicknames the Pope’s Rottweiler and the Panzer Cardinal (after the tank used by the Wehrmacht). Some who worked with him closely describe a man of great courtesy and personal tenderness, shy and reserved but kind, of high moral rectitude and exceptional intelligence.

No other Pope has resigned and continued to live at the Vatican. The most famous earlier Pope to have freely abdicated was Celestine V, a monk and a hermit, who stepped down in 1294, in the hope of returning to his previous life. Instead, he was imprisoned by his successor, Boniface VIII, whom Dante placed in one of the lower circles of Hell. (Dante was not particularly kind to Celestine, either, referring to him as “he who out of cowardice made the great refusal.”)

Benedict and Francis certainly get along better than Celestine and Boniface did. Father Federico Lombardi, who has been a press spokesman for both Popes, told me, “I am not at all surprised, knowing Benedict, that he would handle himself with unimpeachable tact, discretion, and delicacy.” He added, “His public appearances have not been frequent, but they are always welcome and generally occur at the invitation of Pope Francis.” Francis has gone out of his way to treat Benedict with

consideration, waiting to make his initial public appearance as Pope until he could reach Benedict by phone. When he gave an extended interview to the Jesuit magazine *Civiltà Cattolica*, he asked Benedict to review the text and share any comments. Benedict responded with four pages of notes. Francis likens the presence of Benedict to that of a respected and beloved grandfather at home who can be relied on for wise counsel.

Many of those close to Benedict insist that he and Francis have far more in common than is generally supposed. One of the chief exponents of this view is Cardinal Bertone, who worked as Cardinal Ratzinger’s deputy at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and then served as his Secretary of State, in effect the Prime Minister of the Vatican, during most of Benedict’s eight-year pontificate.

I met Bertone several times at his apartment in the Palazzo San Carlo, across the street from Francis’s guest-house residence. He is a tall and imposing man, with a large rectangular head on a thin but substantial frame. He dresses in a simple black cassock, the same clothes he wore at the beginning of his career, as a Salesian father. Only a red skullcap indicates his rank of cardinal. He wears glasses that appear to be slightly tinted, and they make his dark eyes look like deep black pits. One person I met described him as “impenetrable.” He is generally very guarded, but is friendly and congenial when he begins to relax. He asked me to submit a series of questions by e-mail before our interview, and when I arrived he presented me with thirty-three pages of answers, with dates, numbers, and citations. It was as if Bertone didn’t trust himself in a freewheeling discussion, and it seemed to symbolize the troubles Benedict’s papacy had in communicating with the press.

Bertone has been blamed for much of what went wrong during Benedict’s papacy, and he comes across as a proud but wounded man. In the press, he was often depicted as a Vatican bureaucrat intent on blocking reform and covering up corruption. One headline from 2012 stated, “THE VATICAN BANK AND BERTONE PROVE THAT SATAN EXISTS.” Even after Francis replaced him,



Bertone continued to be the target of criticism. Stories and TV news segments described the huge apartment he moved into upon retiring. When he celebrated his eightieth birthday, stories appeared about the extravagant party and the fine food and wines that were served. His habits were frequently compared unflatteringly to the spartan comportment of the new Pope. In response, Bertone has decided to write (with an Italian journalist) his own account of his time at the Vatican, to be called “Il Camerlengo” (“The Chamberlain”), one of the many titles that came with his former job.

Bertone’s apartment seems more fitting for a former head of state than for a priest. He told me that he had the apartment renovated at his own expense and that he shares the space with his personal secretary and three nuns. “Bertone is *un uomo di potere*”—a man of power—“but he is honest,” a member of his entourage told me confidently. He is certainly a devout man, whose calendar and mental landscape are filled with religious feast days and ceremonies. In August, he travelled to Guatemala to participate in various celebrations honoring the founder of the Salesian order. But proximity to power is also clearly important to him. At the time we spoke, he was about to head off for a week of spiritual exercises. When I asked him about this, he was careful to add, “*Col papa, col papa*”—“with the Pope, with the Pope.” Sure enough, I saw a photograph in an Italian magazine of Bertone sharing a seat with Pope Francis at the front of a bus.

Benedict, Bertone insists, is far from a “rigid conservative” or a dry theologian lacking a human touch. “I recall many times walking through St. Peter’s Square when he was a cardinal and his engaging in conversation with young German visitors,” he told me. “He enjoyed eating out at certain trattorias in Rome.” He was beloved of the people in Borgo, the neighborhood right outside the Vatican walls, where both of them lived while working at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. “Shopkeepers, barbers, waitresses would come out and greet him,” Bertone said. He would feed the neighborhood cats, speaking to them in his own language—“some variation of Ba-

varian German, which they seemed to understand.”

The longtime Vatican correspondent John Thavis tells a revealing story about Benedict in his recent book, “Vatican Diaries”: During a trip to Jordan, Benedict was taken to the spot along the Jordan River where Christ is supposed to have asked to be baptized by John the Baptist. Cameramen moved into place, expecting a wonderful photo op. Might the Pope baptize someone? Or at least go down near the river and scoop up a cupful of water? But Benedict remained in his car and the motorcade drove off.

The scandal of sexual abuse in the clergy, which had built up over decades under Benedict’s predecessors, reached its full force under his pontificate, creating the overwhelming impression of a Pope who had lost control of the machinery of government. The year 2010, remembered as the *annus horribilis*, was dominated by ghastly revelations of molestation and rape. And although Benedict had done far more than previous Popes to discipline priestly abuse, he nevertheless took most of the blame. Then, in 2012, the scandal known as VatiLeaks unfolded: reams of personal documents—letters to the Pope and other high officials at the Vatican—began appearing in the Italian press, revealing a world of financial corruption and vicious infighting. The leaker turned out to be the Pope’s personal attendant, Paolo Gabriele, who claimed that he wanted to sound an alarm and make the Pope aware of the festering problems around him.

As the Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Benedict had dealt with the sexual-abuse scandal by doing away with the system of piecemeal responses by individual bishops. In 2004, he pushed for an investigation of Father Marcial Maciel Degollado, the charismatic Mexican who headed the religious order Legionaries of Christ. There is incontrovertible evidence that Maciel abused numerous young seminarians in the course of several decades and fathered several children by women he maintained relationships with. According to an in-depth investigation by Jason Berry, in the *National Catholic Reporter*, Maciel was a wizard at raising money and recruiting seminarians; he

was a favorite of John Paul II and of Angelo Sodano, his Secretary of State. Sodano allegedly deflected Ratzinger from completion of the Maciel investigation, and when the Legion was building a university campus in Rome one of Sodano’s nephews, an engineer, was hired to work on the project.

Benedict, early in his papacy, removed Maciel from the Legion and imposed on him “a reserved life of penitence and prayer, relinquishing any form of public ministry.” Although people at the Vatican are reluctant to criticize John Paul II, whose name was often followed by cries of *Santo subito* (“Sainthood now”), they quietly point out that during the final years of his papacy, when, suffering from Parkinson’s disease, he was severely incapacitated, many things went wrong. Thus, some of the scandals that came to light during Benedict’s papacy were inherited from the previous administration.

Bertone and others close to Benedict argue that he should be seen as a transitional figure, who started many of the reforms that Francis is currently promoting: financial transparency, intolerance of priestly sexual abuse, the diplomatic opening between Cuba and the United States, reform of the Curia.

Breaking with a pattern of quietly transferring predator priests, the Vatican under Benedict and Bertone began removing significant numbers of them from the priesthood—defrocking some three hundred and eighty-four priests in 2011 and 2012, the last years of Benedict’s papacy. But the statistics were not publicized by the Vatican press office; the Associated Press compiled them by picking through annual Vatican statistics. In none of his conversations with me did Bertone mention the defrockings, which seemed another sign of his lack of public-relations skill.

In 2010, Benedict set up a financial regulatory agency, the Financial Intelligence Authority, within the Vatican and brought under control the Vatican bank, the Istituto per le Opere di Religione, or Institute for the Works of Religion. Because of its murky financial transactions, the I.O.R., which is outside Italian jurisdiction, has long been a source of embarrassment for the Vatican. In the early two-thousands, the

Vatican was ranked among the top ten nations in the world that were considered “offshore” financial havens for tax evasion and money laundering.

In September, 2010, Italian authorities refused to allow some twenty-three million euros (about thirty million dollars) to be transferred by the I.O.R. after it refused to explain to whom the funds belonged or why they were being moved. In order to resolve the crisis,

“Do we really need to tell them the truth?” (Balestrero denied this, saying, “I have always coöperated completely and with absolute transparency in my dealings with the regulators from the Council of Europe.”)

The I.O.R. had more than thirty thousand accounts, and thousands of them were dormant or “irregular”: they belonged to nonreligious people or entities that may have engaged in tax eva-

journalist Gianluigi Nuzzi in May of 2012. Gotti Tedeschi was removed as president of the I.O.R. that week, and Paolo Gabriele was arrested. Although it was Gabriele who leaked almost all the documents, practically no one I spoke with at the Vatican thinks that he acted on his own.

VatiLeaks was partly the result of widespread dissatisfaction with Bertone’s management of the Vatican. Both he and the Vatican insist that there were sound legal reasons for not granting regulators access to the I.O.R.’s records—not least, the defense of Vatican sovereignty. It took two years for the I.O.R. to reach substantial compliance with international standards of transparency, and it has quietly closed around forty-six hundred accounts.

On more than one occasion, various cardinals urged Benedict to dismiss Bertone as Secretary of State, but he refused. Bertone was criticized for his widespread involvement in Italy’s affairs. He placed protégés on the boards of Church hospitals and Italian banks; one of his *uomini di fiducia* (“trusted men”) was given a key position at the Italian state broadcasting system. He pushed to have the Vatican bank invest in an Italian movie-production company that made religious films and TV series. He got involved in efforts to shore up Italian Catholic hospitals that were threatened by fraud and bankruptcy. He attended a dinner at the home of the Italian TV personality Bruno Vespa (in a building owned by the Vatican), with Silvio Berlusconi and others, to discuss the future of the Italian government. When I asked Bertone whether he regretted attending the dinner, he replied, “Of course, if I’d known what a fuss people would make of it, I wouldn’t have gone.” None of these actions were illegal or uncommon at the Vatican, but they suggest a conception of the Church that is more Italian than global.

**B**enedict appears to have decided to step down in the spring of 2012, as the VatiLeaks scandal was building. He was eighty-five, and during a trip to Mexico he fell and hit his head against a washbasin while getting up in the night. When he awoke the next morning, his head and pillow were covered



*Benedict’s supporters argue that his resignation enabled the Francis era of papal reforms.*

Benedict signed an anti-money-laundering law; among other things, it established the Financial Intelligence Authority, whose purpose is to flag suspicious transactions and exchange information with foreign banking authorities. In early 2011, Bertone applied for the Vatican to join Moneyval, an oversight agency set up by the Council of Europe to standardize banking-transparency norms among European countries, which included on-site visits.

A ferocious internal battle soon broke out over the speed and the nature of compliance. In the view of some people involved, including Francesco De Pasquale, who was appointed director of the F.I.A., the Vatican was creating merely an appearance of transparency. Before one meeting with the people from Moneyval, De Pasquale recalls, his Vatican counterpart, Monsignor Ettore Balestrero, asked him,

sion or money laundering. Neither the I.O.R.’s president, Ettore Gotti Tedeschi, nor De Pasquale, the nominal head of the regulatory agency, had any idea what these accounts contained.

At another meeting, De Pasquale recalls, Gotti Tedeschi asked, “‘Why shouldn’t we share our records?’ As if to say, ‘We have nothing to hide, right?’” The managers of the I.O.R. and the representatives of the Secretariat of State responded, De Pasquale said, with “glacial silence.” In March of 2012, the Milan branch of JP Morgan closed the account that it held for the I.O.R., because of the institution’s failure to comply with transparency rules. Some of the documents flying back and forth found their way into the press.

After months of damaging revelations came VatiLeaks. An entire book of documents—“Sua Santità” (“His Holiness”)—was published by the Italian



with blood. He decided that he could not continue to make such long trips. He had already committed himself to a trip to Brazil in the summer of 2013 and evidently had that in mind as a kind of deadline. He began discussing the matter of his resignation with Gänswein and Bertone.

"I tried to talk him out of it, arguing that we could scale back his schedule, reduce or eliminate travel, but he was firm," Gänswein told me. Although all parties deny that VatiLeaks was the catalyst, it was surely a factor.

Inevitably, Benedict will be remembered mainly for his decision to resign. That act made Francis's papacy possible, and Benedict's supporters argue that it helped to redefine the papacy for modern times, in ways that abetted Francis's program of reforms. "It was a revolutionary act," Gänswein said.

At the conclave to elect Benedict's successor, there was a powerfully anti-Italian mood. The U.S. cardinals—fourteen of them—and the Latin Americans were adamant in their wish for a clear change of direction. The U.S. cardinals threw their weight behind the strongest South American candidate, the Argentine Jorge Mario Bergoglio.

In 1302, Pope Boniface VIII, the successor to the unfortunate Celestine, issued a papal bull that stated, "We declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff." In 1870, Pius IX, with his declaration of papal infallibility, followed in this tradition, as did John Paul II, a century later, with his doctrinal orthodoxy and demands of strict obedience to the Pope. But there is an alternative tradition of Vatican governance. In the first centuries of Christianity, the Church was governed by a series of synods, or councils, attended by all the bishops who were able to travel to them. The new Pope Francis has gone out of his way to refer to himself as the Bishop of Rome, one of the Pope's many titles, intending to hark back to a synodal tradition, in which the Church was run in a more democratic fashion and the Pope was the first bishop among equals. To combat the built-in insularity of a Rome-centered Church, Francis appointed nine cardinals to his advisory

committee—one from every continent, plus his new Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin. They function as a kind of global cabinet. He has an economic-oversight committee of fifteen people, including eight cardinals and seven laypeople, who possess equal voting rights. He has appointed an auditor general, who has the power to audit any Vatican entity, and who reports directly to the Pope.

If Francis seems to the general public a kindly avuncular figure, within the walls of the Vatican he has a reputation for toughness. In the interview with *Civiltà Cattolica*, he described himself as both "a little naïve" and "a little *furbo*"—shrewd, clever, even tricky. While he has distinguished himself for public gestures that point to a life of humility and selfless charity—paying his own hotel bill after his election as Pope, washing the feet of recovering drug addicts, and advocating a Church of the poor, for the poor—he has moved with equal assertiveness in his insistence on shaking up traditional forms of Vatican governance.

To get an idea of how this revolution is being carried out in practical terms, I arranged to visit the newly created Secretariat for the Economy, headed by the Australian Cardinal Pell. In the past, the Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith—the arbiter of doctrinal orthodoxy—was the most influential of the Vatican prefectures. Pell and the Secretariat for the Economy have been placed on the same level—or, arguably, a higher level. Pell is also part of Francis's global cabinet.

To reach the offices, you walk through the enormous Belvedere Court, a Renaissance courtyard built by Michelangelo's patron, Julius II. Julius II occasionally had the courtyard flooded, using it for mock naval battles and other papal entertainments. Somewhere under its cobblestones are the remains of an elephant, a pet of Pope Leo X. And so it is a bit of a surprise to take the elevator up to the third floor and come upon a group of M.B.A. types speaking English. Until now, Italian has been the language of the Vatican, even among its foreign officeholders. Pope Francis approved making the Secretariat for the

Economy officially bilingual in Italian and English—the first department of the Vatican to be so—and English is decidedly favored. Danny Casey, a fellow-Australian and financial manager whom Cardinal Pell chose to handle the day-to-day operations of the secretariat, told me, "English is the international language of business, so we can hire people from all over the world."

Pell and Casey, who worked together in Sydney, collaborated with major international consultants to get a grip on the Vatican's tangled finances—standardizing accounting practices, identifying valuable assets, and bringing a number of small Vatican properties and institutions under direct management of the Holy See, the legal entity that controls the Vatican and certain institutions in and around Rome. Earlier this year, the new secretariat announced that it had identified some \$1.2 billion in financial assets that were not previously on the Vatican balance sheet. No one asserted that they were hidden for any improper purposes. "When we started our work, we were told that the Holy See comprises some sixty-five different institutions," Casey said. "We have determined that the correct number is a hundred and thirty-six."

How would one discover ownership of \$1.2 billion and seventy-one institutions? Casey explained that the management of Vatican properties has been extremely fragmented. The Catholic church is estimated to own twenty per cent of all real estate in Italy, and a quarter of all real estate in Rome. The hills of Rome hold scores of curious religious institutions, monasteries, convents, seminaries, foundations, confraternities, institutes: hidden treasures with beautiful gardens, frescoed palaces, gurgling fountains, and breathtaking views, many of them family properties—each with its own complex history—donated by some rich Roman to the Church centuries ago.

All the Vatican entities are now being asked to comply with international accounting standards and oversight, and the administrators of these institutions—priests and nuns, in many cases—are being trained in basic accounting practices. Each institution is required to fill out a form stating its objectives for the next year and how much money will be

required to accomplish them. Casey and his team are working hard to distinguish between Vatican assets that are performing religious missions—caring for the elderly, say, or teaching the young—and assets that are “not within the mission.” Properties outside the mission should be considered commercial assets, from which the Vatican should try to gain the best possible monetary return.

Propaganda Fide, the Vatican entity that sponsors religious missions abroad, owns an estimated ten billion dollars in real estate, concentrated mainly in Rome, and including some of the city’s most beautiful historic palaces. About five years ago, news broke that Fide was allegedly offering deals on rentals to Italian politicians, journalists, and businessmen. Bertone told me that the designer Valentino was paying well below market rent for his flagship store, on the fashionable Via del Babuino, in one of Rome’s most expensive neighborhoods. (A Valentino spokesperson said that the store paid market-rate rent, and had never received any favors.)

In an article in the English-language *Catholic Herald*, Cardinal Pell recalled that a British acquaintance had asked him how the Vatican could have carried on for so long with such informal accounting. “I began by remarking that his question was one of the first that would come to our minds as English-speakers,” he said. But it would be “much lower on the list for people in another culture, such as the Italians.”

The observation did not sit well with many in the Vatican. Not long after Pell’s article appeared, *L’Espresso* published its exposé of his expenses. The article was based on a number of internal documents and receipts that had obviously been given to the magazine by Vatican officials eager to take Pell down.

The article reported that Pell and Casey had spent more than five hundred thousand euros on office expenses in a few months. Casey is paid a salary of fifteen thousand euros a month (tax-free), a colossal sum for a Vatican employee. Pell charged religious vestments—a few thousand euros—as an expense. Pell and Casey frequently flew business class and treated their business-adviser guests to champagne. All this would be normal in the business

world but was out of tune with the modesty and simplicity practiced by Francis.

Although Francis has inveighed against the more savage forms of unfettered capitalism, in the management of Vatican finances he has relied on major companies from the capitalist world: McKinsey, Deloitte Consulting, EY (formerly Ernst & Young). He has given a much greater role to lay professionals and reduced the administrative duties of cardinals, who have little preparation for them. The new team has tried to institute the so-called “four eyes” principle, in which all important financial decisions must be carefully reviewed by two people, in order to cut back on the kind of internal fiefdoms that were until recently the norm at the Vatican—one cardinal in charge of billions of dollars of real estate, another in charge of a multibillion-dollar hospital system.

There is evidence that Francis and his team have had some impact. In the last two years of Benedict’s pontificate, the F.I.A. reported only seven instances of “suspicious activity.” In 2013, Francis’s first year, it made two hundred and two such reports; in 2014, it made a hundred and forty-seven. Italian po-

lice investigating corruption in Milan wiretapped a prominent politician (subsequently convicted of taking bribes) complaining of the new atmosphere at the Vatican. “There is no protection in the Vatican, because the new Pope . . . couldn’t give a crap about the Italian world, and then among the cardinals there is no one who can offer protection anymore.”

The abiding hope of the Secretariat of the Economy is, not surprisingly, to generate more income. “Make more money from our assets so that we do more good,” Casey says. The I.O.R., one of the main revenue sources, has only some six billion dollars in deposits and assets; the real-estate assets of the Catholic Church worldwide have been estimated at two trillion dollars, a sum comparable to the G.D.P. of Russia, India, or Brazil.

Some financial reformers are urging the creation of an umbrella organization, to be called Vatican Asset Management, which would assume management of the financial assets held by the Vatican City State and its various entities and, eventually, all its real-estate assets as well. The Vatican bank also proposed creating an investment fund, to



*“If he has a tell, I haven’t found it.”*





"He replied all."

be registered in Luxembourg, that would offer an attractive investment vehicle to I.O.R. account holders. Francis has rejected the Luxembourg proposal.

According to Piero Schiavazzi, a journalist who has written extensively about the Vatican, "There is a struggle going on within the Vatican, between the more capitalist-minded people, like Cardinal Pell, and those who want something different. The first group is for working within the capitalist system and making as much money as possible in order to do good works. The other group, which Francis may favor, thinks the Vatican should use its money to actually change the system, to invest in poor countries directly in order to change their structure." In July, the Pope called for a new economic order, focussed on the poor, declaring, "Let us not be afraid to say it: we want change, real change, structural change," and decrying a system that "has imposed the mentality of profit at any price, with no concern for social exclusion or the destruction of nature." This

critique of unfettered capitalism is also at the heart of his recent encyclical "Laudato Si'," which promotes a worldwide effort to reduce global warming: "I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. . . . Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods."

The coalition that elected Francis, with its strong support from conservative American cardinals, may begin to fray this fall. He will visit the United States this month, ending up in Philadelphia, for the World Meeting of Families, a precursor of the Synod on the Family, whose next session will take place in October. At last year's meeting, progressives among the attending bishops and cardinals and (nonvoting) lay people attempted to introduce changes that would make the Church more tolerant of cohabiting unmarried couples, divorced Catholics who have

remarried, and gays. This year, the Pope will be expected to confront these matters in all their doctrinal complexity.

In his first two years, Francis, through the deployment of his modest personality and inclusive rhetoric, has skillfully created the impression of a much more open and tolerant Church without actually changing Church doctrine. Just last week, he announced that Catholics who had abortions could be forgiven their sin if they confessed sincerely during this special Jubilee year. In the past, abortion was a sin that provoked immediate excommunication. But Francis was building on a precedent: the Vatican had already allowed bishops to offer absolution under special circumstances.

Sometimes Francis sidesteps divisive issues by simply changing the subject, pointing out that the central missions of Christianity are love, charity, mercy, and caring for the poor. "We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods," he said in the interview in *Civiltà Cattolica*. Even with the decision to hold a synod on the family, he was careful not to move without firm Church precedents: John Paul II held a synod on the family in 1980, but in a different spirit. "Most bishops spent an inordinate amount of time in their speeches quoting Pope John Paul II to himself," Father Thomas Reese, a Jesuit priest and Vatican analyst, wrote recently. The one notable exception was the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop John R. Quinn, of San Francisco, who suggested opening a dialogue on possible exceptions to the contraception ban. "The negative reaction from the Vatican was fierce," Reese went on. "Many felt that Quinn's influence in the Church declined speedily after the synod."

John Paul II, troubled that so many American Catholics disagreed with the Church on matters of sexual morality, took pains to appoint bishops who adhered to the orthodox line on moral and sexual issues. And so although American Catholics are among the world's most liberal, some of the bishops who represent them will very likely oppose most reforms. Francis has carefully avoided taking sides in the debate but has appeared to tip his hand by, for example,

referring to Communion as “not a reward for the perfect but a medicine for the sick.”

Before last year’s Synod on the Family session, Francis circulated a questionnaire to community parishes on topics that included contraception and divorce. The chasm between Church doctrine and the beliefs and the behavior of actual practicing Catholics has become dangerously wide. In America in recent decades, the Church has been losing ground. Some thirty-two million people who were brought up Catholic have left the Church—in part because they have found its hierarchy tone-deaf to the day-to-day concerns of ordinary people.

During discussions at the synod about divorce, cohabitation, and homosexuality, progressives brought up the concept of “graduality”—that sinners might be moving toward the truth without having arrived at it. Thus, unmarried couples should be encouraged to marry, not be condemned. “All these situations require a constructive response, seeking to transform them into opportunities that can lead to an actual marriage and family in conformity with the Gospel,” a preliminary draft noted, and it included language about homosexuals having “gifts and qualities” that need to be recognized. As the German cardinal Reinhard Marx, one of the leading progressives, explained at the synod, “Take the case of two homosexuals who have been living together for thirty-five years and taking care of each other, even in the last phases of their lives. How can I say that this has no value?” As for divorced Catholics who have remarried and wish to take Communion, the gradualists maintain that such Catholics have sinned, repented, and are trying in a second marriage to fulfill their family obligations.

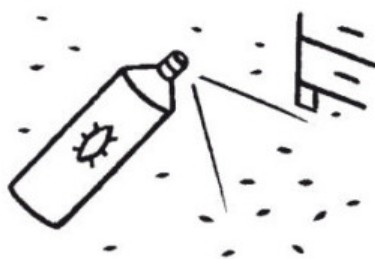
At the synod, Cardinal Raymond Burke, the former Archbishop of St. Louis, and then head of the Vatican’s highest court, vehemently denounced the reform effort. Burke had once declared that he would deny Communion to the Democratic Presidential nominee John Kerry, because of Kerry’s pro-choice position. After the synod, he implicitly criticized Francis, saying that the Pope was sowing “confusion,” and

that the Church had become “a ship without a rudder.” Francis had him transferred to a less powerful post.

Conservative Catholic Web sites warn about “Catholicism lite.” Indeed, when the organizers of the synod published a midterm report that included many of the positions of the progressive camp, there was a minor uprising, with traditionalists feeling that those preparing the provisional draft had carried out a kind of coup d’état that did not reflect the consensus of the bishops. In a subsequent draft, approved by the bishops, some of the more controversial passages were modified or eliminated. The passage about the “gifts and qualities” of homosexuals was gone. When the Vatican’s final report was published, it revealed the votes in favor of and against each paragraph. The contested passages (about gay people and divorced Catholics who have remarried) were the only ones that failed to achieve the two-thirds majority that constitutes a consensus.

Whatever the outcome of the debate, it is ultimately the Pope who decides on the content of the synod’s final document. “The Church is a communion, not a democracy,” Monsignor Vincenzo Paglia, the head of the Pontifical Council on the Family, said. Yet the Church prefers achieving large majorities, to avoid factions and ruptures. Francis has been working very hard to change the consensus within the Church rather than impose change.

“He is very Jesuitical in saying or



doing something that seems to push discussion much further down the road than he actually intends to go,” Andrea Gagliarducci, a Catholic journalist and traditionalist who often writes pieces that are highly critical of Francis, said. “But that pushes everyone further down the road than they intended to go.”

For example, in the case of homosexual believers, even Cardinal Bertone

agrees that the Church must do better in creating a welcoming and accepting atmosphere. He points out that Pope Benedict, as a cardinal in the eighties, made it clear that the Church opposed any efforts to denigrate homosexuals or discriminate against them. Bertone glides over the difference between Cardinal Ratzinger’s description of homosexuality as an “intrinsic moral evil” and Francis’s “Who am I to judge?” Even so, Bertone’s softening on the issue is evidence that Francis has changed the debate within the Church. It is the particular genius of Catholicism that it continues to change while insisting that it has never changed. In 1845, Cardinal Newman (who subsequently opposed the declaration of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council) wrote that, although there was no change in Heaven, “here below, to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often.”

I thought of this ever-changing, never-changing Church as I visited an elderly cardinal in his palatial apartment near the Vatican. When I rang the doorbell, I was greeted by an unprepossessing man in his early eighties. In the entryway, there was a life-size, full-length portrait of him. Then I noticed another large painted portrait of him a few feet away.

He led me into the living room, where there were at least seven other portraits of him, a few of them large, life-size paintings. The main corridor was lined with photographs of the many world leaders the cardinal had met, some including him, others signed and dedicated to him. He did not display any awareness that a ferocious tongue-lashing that Francis gave the cardinals last Christmas about the narcissistic and vain nature of the Roman Curia might apply to him. He took the Vatican party line—that Francis’s papacy was not a revolution but a further elaboration of the legacy of his predecessors. The differences, he said, were of personality and of emphasis, and were attributable to Francis’s origins in South America. “Every Pope is different,” he said. “Every Pope reflects his own time and is the right Pope for that particular time. And so the Church adapts. This is the secret to its survival over two thousand years, with the help of the Holy Spirit.” ♦



“We meet in the most tragic of circumstances,” Judy Clarke, the lead defense lawyer representing Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, began. She stood at a lectern, facing the jurors, in a dark suit accented by a blue-and-purple scarf that she wears so often it seems like a courtroom talisman. To her right, George O’Toole, the judge, looked at her over his spectacles. Behind her was Tsarnaev, the slim, soft-featured young man who was on trial for the bombing at the Boston Marathon on April 15, 2013—the worst domestic terrorist attack since September 11th.

Outside the courthouse, snow from successive blizzards had piled up in grubby dunes. Clarke, who lives in San Diego, despises cold weather, but she’d endured an entire New England winter. “Judy was in Boston for a year before the case went to trial, meeting with this kid,” her friend Jonathan Shapiro, who has taught with Clarke at Washington and Lee University Law School, told me. It was early March, and nearly two years had passed since Tsarnaev, along with his older brother, Tamerlan, detonated two homemade bombs near the finish line of the marathon, killing three people and injuring two hundred and sixty-four; they then carjacked a Mercedes, murdered an M.I.T. police officer named Sean Collier, and engaged in a shootout with the cops. Dzhokhar, nineteen at the time, accidentally killed Tamerlan, who was twenty-six, by running over him in the getaway car. Dzhokhar was discovered, wounded and expecting to die, inside a dry-docked boat in the suburb of Watertown. While he was recovering in the hospital, Miriam Conrad, the chief federal public defender in Massachusetts, contacted Clarke, and Clarke decided to take the case.

Clarke may be the best death-penalty lawyer in America. Her efforts helped spare the lives of Ted Kaczynski (the Unabomber), Zacarias Moussaoui (the so-called “twentieth hijacker” in the 9/11 plot), and Jared Loughner (who killed six people and wounded thirteen others, including Representative Gabrielle Giffords, at a Tucson mall). “Every time Judy takes a new case, it’s a soul-searching process for her,” Clarke’s old friend Elisabeth Semel told me. “Because it’s an enormous responsibility.” On rare occasions when Clarke withdrew or was

A REPORTER AT LARGE

## THE WORST OF THE WORST

*Judy Clarke excelled at saving the lives of notorious killers.*

*Then she took the case of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.*

BY PATRICK RADDEN KEEFE



*Clarke, wearing a scarf, entering the federal courthouse in Boston during the trial of Tsarnaev.*



*Her friend Elisabeth Semel says, "She has a well of compassion that just runs a little deeper."*



removed from a defense team, a defendant received the death penalty. But in cases that she tried through the sentencing phase, she had never lost a client to death row.

The administration of capital punishment is notoriously prone to error. According to the Death Penalty Information Center, a hundred and fifty-five death-row inmates have been exonerated, and it stands to reason that innocent people still face execution. Clarke does not represent such individuals. Her specialty is what the Supreme Court has called “the worst of the worst”: child rapists, torturers, terrorists, mass murderers, and others who have committed crimes so appalling that even death-penalty opponents might be tempted to make an exception. Tsarnaev was indisputably guilty; the lead prosecutor, William Weinreb, described in his opening statement a video in which Tsarnaev is seen depositing a backpack directly behind an eight-year-old boy on Boylston Street and walking away before it explodes. In January, 2014, Attorney General Eric Holder, who had publicly expressed his personal opposition to the death penalty, announced that the government would seek to execute Tsarnaev, explaining that the scale of the horror had compelled the decision.

The prosecution referred to Tsarnaev as Dzhokhar, his given name, which is Chechen and means “jewel.” But as Clarke addressed the jury she used the nickname that he had adopted as a high-school student, in Cambridge, Massachusetts: Jahar. In a capital case, a defense attorney seeks to humanize the client to the point that jurors might hesitate to condemn him to death. Clarke has said that her job is to transform the defendant from an unfathomable monster into “one of us.”

Her use of the nickname also signalled genuine familiarity. Clarke spends hundreds of hours getting to know reviled criminals. Her friend Tina Hunt, a federal public defender in Georgia who has known Clarke for thirty years, said, “Judy is fascinated by what makes people tick—what drives people to commit these kinds of crimes. People aren’t born evil. She has a very deep and abiding faith in that idea.”

Most of Clarke’s success in death-penalty cases has come from negotiating

plea deals. She often cites a legal adage: the first step in losing a death-penalty case is picking a jury. To avoid a trial, Clarke does not shy away from the muscular exertion of leverage. In 2005, she secured a plea deal for Eric Rudolph, who detonated bombs at abortion clinics and at the Atlanta Summer Olympics, after Rudolph promised to disclose the location of an explosive device that he had buried near a residential neighborhood in North Carolina. Soon after joining Tsarnaev’s team, Clarke indicated that her client was prepared to plead guilty in exchange for a sentence of life without parole. Federal officials declined this offer. Clarke then pushed to move the trial out of Boston, arguing that local jurors would have an “overwhelming prejudice” against Tsarnaev. Judge O’Toole disagreed.

Clarke looked at the jurors one by one. “For the next several weeks, we’re all going to come face to face with unbearable grief, loss, and pain caused by a series of senseless, horribly misguided acts carried out by two brothers,” she said. She is tall, with straight brown hair and long arms that dangle, a little comically, like the boughs of a weeping willow. Clarke’s style with a jury is warm, conversational, devoid of bombast. Whenever she paused for emphasis, the muted clatter of typing would fill the room as journalists with laptops live-tweeted the proceedings.

“There’s little that occurred the week of April the 15th—the bombings, the murder of Officer Collier, the carjacking, the shootout in Watertown—that we dispute,” she said. Clarke was acknowledging her client’s guilt. So why bother with a trial? Each juror had a digital monitor for viewing evidence, and Clarke flashed a photograph of Jahar as a young boy, dark-eyed and floppy-haired, sitting next to a much larger Tamerlan. Clarke said, “What took Jahar Tsarnaev from *this* to Jahar Tsarnaev and his brother with backpacks walking down Boylston?”

Before-and-after photographs are standard exhibits in Clarke’s repertoire. The effect is deliberately jarring, like seeing the yearbook photo of a movie star before he became famous. Clarke promised the jury that she would not try to minimize or excuse Tsarnaev’s conduct. Instead—in a vanishingly fine distinction—she hoped to present his life in a

way that might mitigate his moral culpability. The jurors stared past her at Tsarnaev. He sat at the defense table, fiddling with his unruly dark hair, in a blazer and a shirt that was unbuttoned a little rakishly for a murder trial. “It’s going to be a lot to ask of you to hold your minds and hearts open,” Clarke said. “But that is what we ask.”

Among death-penalty lawyers, Clarke is known, without irony, as St. Judy, on the basis of her humility, her generosity, and her devotion to her clients. She has not given an interview to the mainstream press in twenty years. But, in a 2013 commencement speech at Gonzaga University School of Law, Clarke said that her clients have obliged her to “redefine what a win means.” Victory usually means a life sentence. Even so, Clarke said, she owes a debt of gratitude to her clients, for “the lessons they’ve taught me—about human behavior and human frailty—and the constant reminder that there but for the grace of God go I.”

In some ways, Clarke’s public persona resembles that of Sister Helen Prejean, the Catholic nun from New Orleans who runs the Ministry Against the Death Penalty. In her 1993 book, “Dead Man Walking,” Prejean describes the bond that she formed with a killer who had been condemned to death. The “weight of his loneliness, his abandonment, draws me,” she writes. She abhors his crimes, yet senses a “sheer and essential humanness” in him.

But Clarke is no nun. Her convictions are rooted in constitutional law, not the Bible, and in the courtroom she is unabashedly gladiatorial. In 1990, she told the *Los Angeles Times*, “I love the fight.” Though she lacks the flamboyant manner often associated with trial lawyers, she is not above courtroom theatre. In 2003, when she represented Jay Lentz—a former Navy intelligence officer accused of murdering his wife—Clarke summoned to the stand Lentz’s twelve-year-old daughter, Julia, who was four years old at the time of the killing. Julia told the jury that her father meant everything to her. The judge had warned Clarke that Julia was not to address her father, but Clarke defied this directive, asking her if she had anything to tell him. “I love you,

Daddy,” she said. The jury spared his life.

Clarke is driven by an intense philosophical opposition to the death penalty. She once observed that “legalized homicide is not a good idea for a civilized nation.” Her friend David Ruhnke, who has tried more than a dozen capital cases, said, “It’s not often you get to occupy the moral high ground as a criminal-defense lawyer, but I think in death-penalty law we do.” According to friends, Clarke is also drawn to the intellectual problem posed by unconscionable crime. When Eric Rudolph went on the run from authorities in the mountains of North Carolina, Clarke told Tina Hunt, “If they ever catch him, I want to represent him.” Hunt recalls saying, “Are you fucking nuts? He’s a fanatic! He blows up abortion clinics! Judy, we need to make you some flash cards that just say ‘NO.’” According to Hunt, Clarke is perpetually seeking “the key that turns the lock that opens the door that would let a person do something like this.”

In this regard, Clarke evokes the French attorney Jacques Vergès, who represented Klaus Barbie (the Butcher of Lyon), Carlos the Jackal, and the Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan. Vergès, who died in 2013, took a certain glee in upending the comforting pieties of criminal justice, by insisting that his clients were more human than others cared to admit. “What was so shocking about Hitler ‘the monster’ was that he loved his dog so much and kissed the hands of his secretaries,” Vergès once remarked. “The interesting thing about my clients is discovering what brings them to do these horrific things.” As the Tsarnaev case began, Clarke told the jury that she would not contest the “who” or the “what” of the case. She would focus on the “why.”

Clarke, who is sixty-three, grew up in Asheville, North Carolina. From an early age, she told the San Antonio *Express News*, she “thought it would be neat to be Perry Mason and win all the time.” At Furman College, in Greenville, South Carolina, she studied psychology and led a successful campaign to change the name of the student government to the Association of Furman Students, on the ground that the group lacked genuine governing authority. She married her college boyfriend, Thomas (Speedy) Rice—a jovial round-faced man who also became an attorney. After she com-



*“I’d like to see what we can do about fixing your aspect ratio.”*

pleted law school, at the University of South Carolina, they moved to San Diego, where, in 1977, she joined a small office of federal public defenders.

“At that time, you could count the number of women criminal-defense lawyers practicing in San Diego County on one hand,” Elisabeth Semel, who met Clarke during this period and now runs the death-penalty clinic at the University of California-Berkeley School of Law, recalls. Semel and Clarke went for ten-mile jogs on weekends. “We needed the camaraderie, because it was a hostile environment,” Semel said, adding that the judicial establishment in San Diego was notably conservative. Clarke worked tirelessly on behalf of undocumented immigrants, drug dealers, and others charged with federal crimes who could not afford a private attorney. She was soon running the office, doubling the number of lawyers and tripling the budget. She asked new hires to sign a “blood letter” committing to work at least sixty hours a week. Clarke routinely put in eighty.

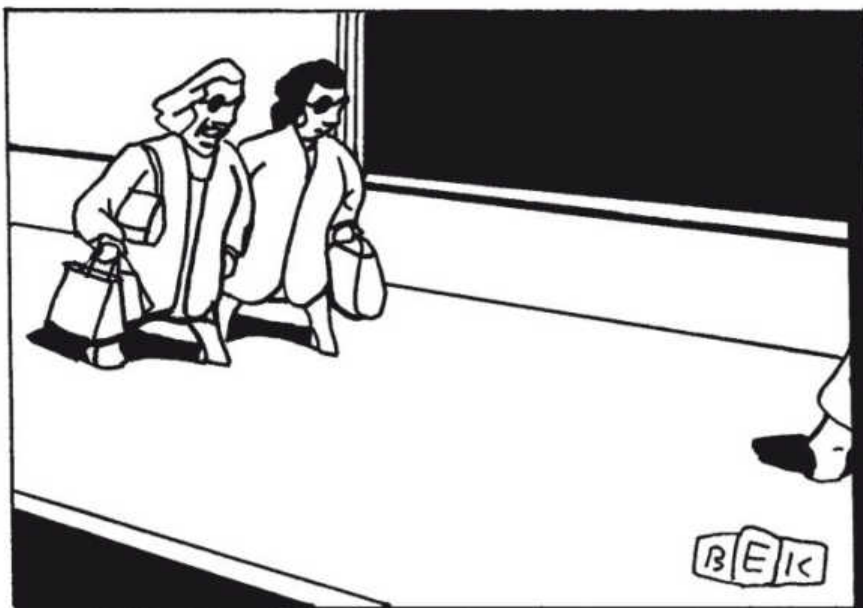
In 1991, Clarke joined a large law firm, McKenna Long & Aldridge, where she could apply her formidable skills to defending white-collar clients. But, according to Bob Brewer, the partner who recruited Clarke, “she had a real problem charging people for her time.” They

devised a system in which Clarke would meet a new client, hear about the case, then politely excuse herself, allowing Brewer to swoop in and negotiate a fee. Clarke lasted a little more than a year. These days, when discussing her career, she has been known to deadpan, “I was sentenced to fifteen months of private practice at McKenna Long & Aldridge.”

In 1992, Clarke moved to Spokane and took over the federal defenders’ office for Eastern Washington and Idaho. At the time, one of her law-school friends, David Bruck, remarked that this was like Mozart arriving in town to direct the Spokane Symphony Orchestra.

Bruck is a soft-spoken Montreal native with thick white hair. He moved to South Carolina in 1972 to attend law school and became one of the state’s most prominent capital-defense attorneys. In 1994, he took on the case of Susan Smith, a twenty-three-year-old woman from the small city of Union, who was charged with murdering her two sons—both toddlers—by letting her car slide into a lake while they were strapped into the back seat. Initially, Smith claimed that a black man had carjacked her and kidnapped the children, but, after a frantic, racially divisive manhunt, she confessed that her boys could be found in the lake. The





*"I always thought I'd be good at getting drunk  
and crying on camera for Bravo."*

state sought the death penalty, which meant that Smith was entitled to a second attorney; Bruck turned to his old friend Judy Clarke. When she protested that she had never tried a death-penalty case, Bruck said, "That's not what I need. I need *you*."

In the Smith trial, Clarke developed many of the techniques that have become hallmarks of her work. She promised jurors that she wouldn't trivialize what Smith had done or present an "abuse excuse." Even so, she argued that the jury had an obligation to understand not just Smith's awful act but her whole life leading up to that moment. Smith's father, a millworker, had killed himself when she was little. Her mother remarried, and her stepfather molested her. She had twice attempted suicide, and at the lake, Clarke argued, Smith had intended to die with her children; at the last second, a survival instinct propelled her out of the car, at which point it was too late to save the kids.

The prosecutors presented a devastating case. An ex-boyfriend of Smith's, the son of a wealthy mill owner, testified that, a week before the killing, he had sent Smith a breakup letter in which he wrote, "There are some things about you that aren't suited for me, and yes I mean your children." A diver testified about

finding the car, overturned, at the bottom of the lake and spotting "a small hand pressed against the glass."

The defense summoned one of Smith's prison guards, who attested to her remorse. "Everyone has a breaking point," Clarke told the jury. "Susan broke where many of us might bend." Her star witness was Beverly Russell, Smith's stepfather. He tearfully confessed to molesting Smith and, addressing her directly, said, "You do not have all the guilt in this tragedy."

Smith received a life sentence. In a subsequent interview, Clarke suggested that while it is sometimes prudent to move a trial away from where the alleged crime took place, in this instance it helped that Smith was tried by South Carolinians. "She was one of them," Clarke said. After the case concluded, Clarke paid a Christmas visit to Smith in jail. Mindful of her clients' isolation, she remembers birthdays and holidays. South Carolina later passed a law barring courts from appointing out-of-state lawyers in capital cases.

A death-penalty trial consists of two parts: the "guilt phase," in which the jury determines whether the defendant committed the crime, and the "penalty phase," in which the jurors vote on a sen-

tence. Although Clarke had effectively conceded Tsarnaev's guilt in her opening statement, this did not stop prosecutors from summoning people who had lost limbs, or family members, in the bombing. Some entered the courtroom in wheelchairs, others on prosthetic legs. With astonishing composure, they described how their bodies had been damaged by shrapnel from the blast. Before-and-after photographs are potent exhibits for prosecutors as well, and as William Campbell testified about how his twenty-nine-year-old daughter, Krystle, was killed, jurors saw a photograph of her at her First Communion, wearing a fluffy white dress.

After every witness, Clarke murmured, "We have no questions." Sometimes she thanked witnesses for their testimony. To cross-examine them would have been pointless, even offensive. "Defense attorneys have a fraught relationship with victims—not just in an individual case but almost as a metaphysical concept," Reuben Camper Cahn, who runs the federal defenders' office in San Diego, told me. "You've got to be respectful and aware of them, but at the same time you've got to focus on your client." Cahn worked with Clarke on the defense of Jared Loughner, and says that she is "especially good at remaining open to the suffering of the victims, and thinking about how each move that she and her colleagues make will be perceived not just by jurors but by victims."

In the Tsarnaev case, Clarke was joined by Miriam Conrad, the federal defender in Boston, and David Bruck. They maintained a quiet intimacy with their client. Some nights when court was in session, Tsarnaev slept in a holding cell in the bowels of the courthouse, allowing him to be closer to Clarke and her team, who stayed at a nearby hotel. But Tsarnaev wasn't easy to manage. Each day, he sauntered to the defense table and slouched in his chair, his rangy limbs arrayed in a posture of insouciance, like a kid behind the wheel of a lowrider. Some commentators felt that Tsarnaev was smirking, though his lawyers noted in court that his features had been slightly twisted by nerve damage sustained when he was shot in the face by the police.

One witness, a broad-shouldered man in his thirties named Marc Fucarile, had lost a leg in the blast; he revealed that

he might yet lose the other. Prosecutors projected X-rays of his skeleton, and the dark spaces between his bones were perforated by bright-blue dots: BBs and other shrapnel that remained inside him. Fucarile, who had undergone nearly seventy operations, was in a wheelchair, but he glared at Tsarnaev as though he might launch out of the witness box and throttle him. Tsarnaev refused to look at him.

Clarke sat on Tsarnaev's left, and Conrad, an animated woman in her fifties, sat on his right, so that the jurors always saw him flanked by women. They whispered and exchanged little jokes with him, and they touched him—a pat on the back, a squeeze of the arm. This was deliberate: like the Pope stooping to embrace a disfigured pilgrim at St. Peter's, the women were indicating that Tsarnaev was not a leper. Such gestures weren't aimed only at jurors. A training guide that Clarke helped prepare for defense attorneys in 2006 notes, "In capital cases, appropriate physical contact is frequently the one gesture that can maintain a defendant's trust." Under the terms of his confinement, Tsarnaev was not permitted to touch any visitors, even relatives, so the casual contact of his attorneys likely represented his only remaining form of tangible human connection.

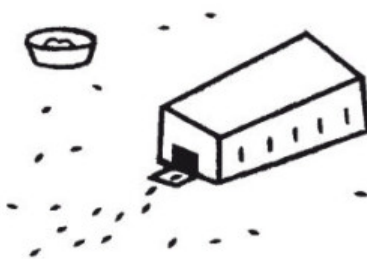
The centerpiece of the government's case was a montage of photographs and videos taken on the day of the bombing. One image, captured shortly before the first blast, shows a family of five from Dorchester watching runners cross the finish line. Just behind them, semi-obscured by a tree, stands Tsarnaev, in a backward baseball cap. On March 5th, the family's father, Bill Richard, a slim, haunted-looking man, took the stand. After the bomb blast threw him across the street, he recalled, he scrambled to find his children. He located his eleven-year-old, Henry, who was unharmed, and then saw his seven-year-old, Jane, lying by the tree. He picked her up, but her leg did not come with her. "It was blown off," he said. Bill saw his wife, Denise, hunched over their eight-year-old son, Martin, who had been closest to the blast. Bill wanted to help care for Martin, but his daughter was losing blood so rapidly that she was not likely to survive unless he got her to an ambulance. He took one final look at Martin. "I knew he wasn't going to make it,"

Bill said. "From what I saw, there was no chance."

He ran to an ambulance, and Jane survived. Denise was blinded in one eye. While jurors and spectators wept, a medical examiner described the blast's impact on Martin's body. Wearing rubber gloves, he held up the shorts that Martin had been wearing. They could have been long pants, he said—it was hard to tell. The fabric had melted.

This was an act of terrorism, surely, and prosecutors characterized the Tsarnaevs as jihadists who set out to kill American civilians in the name of radical Islam. Investigators had retrieved from Jahar's laptop a downloaded copy of *Inspire*, a publication associated with Al Qaeda, which featured an article titled "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom." In the Tsarnaevs' family apartment in Cambridge, the F.B.I. had discovered the residue of explosives. Prosecutors also had what amounted to a confession from Jahar. Believing that he was dying in the dry-docked boat, he had written a message in pencil on the fiberglass interior.

Initially, the government wanted to remove the section of the boat bearing the confession and display it in court. The defense objected that the jury needed to see Jahar's message in its full context. This was vintage Clarke. When she represented Ted Kaczynski, she felt that the jury should see the cramped shack in the Montana wilderness where the Una-



bomber had built his letter bombs and composed his manifesto. The shack was hauled to Sacramento on a flatbed truck. One day in March, Judge O'Toole accompanied the lawyers, the jury, and Tsarnaev to a warehouse where the boat sat, raised, on a trailer. The boat was streaked with Tsarnaev's blood and riddled with more than a hundred bullet holes.

"God has a plan for each person," Tsarnaev wrote. "Mine was to hide in this boat and shed some light on our ac-

tions." He was "jealous" of Tamerlan for having achieved martyrdom. "The U.S. Government is killing our innocent civilians," he added, noting that "Muslims are one body, you hurt one you hurt us all." The note was difficult to read, because bullets had ripped through it. But near the end Tsarnaev wrote, "I don't like killing innocent people it is forbidden in Islam but due to said [bullet hole] it is allowed. All credit goes to [bullet hole]."

For all the putative radicalism of these sentiments, there was an inescapable sense, even as the government presented its case, that Jahar Tsarnaev was less a soldier of God than a wayward child, curiously detached from his terrorist acts. He was hardly ascetic: at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, where he was a sophomore, Jahar was known as a pot dealer. Less than an hour after the bombs exploded, surveillance cameras at a Whole Foods in Cambridge captured him selecting a half-gallon of milk, paying for it, leaving, then returning to exchange it for another half-gallon. Hours after the bombing, he tweeted, "Ain't no love in the heart of the city. Stay safe people," and, "I'm a stress free kind of guy." He went with a friend to the gym. It was precisely this eerie remove that had led authorities to identify him as a suspect. F.B.I. officials, examining surveillance footage of the marathon, noticed a man in a baseball cap who did not react when the first blast sent everyone else scrambling.

Clarke isn't a notably original legal theorist. The course that she has taught at Washington and Lee is a practicum focussed on the rules and tactics of lawyering. She appeared twice before the Supreme Court before she was forty, in cases involving technical matters of criminal procedure—and lost both, unanimously. Still, in one of the cases, she paused to explain the subtleties of an obscure point of criminal law, and she clearly knew more about it than the Justices did. In a guide that Clarke prepared for federal defense lawyers, she invoked Thomas Edison's formula for genius: "ninety-nine per cent perspiration and one per cent inspiration."

In a capital case, much of the exertion involves detective work. Collaborating with investigators and mental-health experts, Clarke assembles a "social



history”—a comprehensive biography of the client, often drawing on decades of family records. She tracks down relatives, teachers, neighbors, and co-workers, looking for signs of mental illness or instability in the client’s past. Such interviews, Clarke wrote in a court filing in 2013, can be “invaluable in building the case for a life verdict by documenting the nature, extent, and consequences of trauma.”

By searching for what Tina Hunt called “the key that turns the lock,” a capital-defense attorney operates on the broad assumption that the perpetrators of terrible crimes are also victims themselves—indeed, that *only* victims of mental illness or awful circumstances could commit such crimes. “Nobody starts out as a killer,” Jonathan Shapiro said. “These folks are damaged goods when they come to us. They’re like a tangled-up piece of cloth. And our job is to try to untangle it, to figure out what made them the way that they are.” Clarke has said that most of her death-penalty clients have endured “unbelievable trauma,” and that “many suffer from severe cognitive-development issues that affect the core of their being.” She often invokes a mantra of capital-defense work: “None of us, not any one of us, wants to be defined by the worst day or the worst hour or the worst moment of our lives.”

You can oppose the death penalty on any number of grounds and still find this assertion curious. If we mustn’t judge someone who kills a child for his willingness to kill a child, isn’t that essentially saying that we should never judge anyone at all? I wondered if this line of reasoning was truly an article of faith for Clarke. Indeed, you might think that spending time with killers would disabuse a lawyer of any illusions about the virtues of humanity. But a dozen of Clarke’s friends and colleagues assured me that she ardently believes in the essential goodness of each client. “She has a well of compassion that just runs a little deeper,” Elisabeth Semel said.

Clarke goes to unusual lengths to establish bonds with her clients. “Many lawyers will go in to meet with the client, and if the client doesn’t want to talk they’ll give up and leave,” Laurie Levenson, a professor at Loyola Law School, said. “If Judy goes and they don’t want to talk, she’ll come back the next day and

the day after that.” David Bruck once told the *Times* that Clarke is a preternatural listener: “Even people who are quite mentally ill can identify someone who is real and who wants to protect them.” When Clarke met with Jared Loughner, who suffers from paranoid schizophrenia, he threw chairs at her, lunged at her, and spat on her. (In court, Clarke and her colleagues downplayed these outbursts, arguing, in effect, that this was just Jared being Jared.) Before the Boston trial, Clarke went to the Caucasus, along with a Russian-speaking colleague, in order to meet Tsarnaev’s parents. This labor of empathy can be consuming. In Bruck’s words, “The client becomes her world.”

Clarke’s husband, Speedy Rice, is also a death-penalty opponent. In 2009, he helped defend a Khmer Rouge torturer, Kaing Guek Eav, in a war-crimes trial in Cambodia. (Kaing received life imprisonment.) Clarke and Rice have always had dogs—including a blind-and-deaf pug—but they have no children. Several of Clarke’s friends suggested to me that it would have been impossible for her to raise kids and maintain the pace of her work.

Because Clarke’s cases unfold in federal courts across the country, the decision to take on a new client can mean months away from home. With the exception of the Susan Smith case, all Clarke’s capital cases have been federal. Most death-penalty prosecutions occur at the state level, where innocent people have often been condemned to death. In such states as Alabama or Texas, there are not enough capable death-penalty lawyers, and even strong ones cannot secure adequate funds to prepare a case properly. In state cases, a defense counsel is sometimes given an investigation budget of only a thousand dollars; attorneys’ fees can be capped at as little as thirty thousand dollars, even when a case demands more than a thousand hours of lawyering. “People who are well represented at trial do not get the death penalty,” Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg once said.

Federal death-penalty prosecutions are far rarer, and tend to be reserved for cases, like Tsarnaev’s, in which the government has strong evidence of guilt. Often in these cases, defense attorneys are paid more and have latitude to hire

experts, investigators, and additional attorneys. Though no figure has yet been released, Tsarnaev’s defense could cost millions of dollars in public funds.

To one way of thinking, a talented attorney who fiercely opposes the death penalty should concentrate on saving defendants who may be innocent. Reuben Camper Cahn said, “For a utilitarian, is there an overconcentration of talent and resources in the federal system? Yes.” People who know Clarke explained her focus on federal cases by citing the severe financial constraints on capital-defense attorneys in the states where most executions take place.

In Boston, Clarke had ample resources, but she was hamstrung by another restriction: official secrecy. The government, citing the ongoing security threat that Tsarnaev might pose by communicating with co-conspirators—or by inspiring impressionable people to follow his example—invoked a protocol, known as Special Administrative Measures, that forbade the defendant from communicating with anyone outside his legal team and his immediate family. Secrecy also enveloped the legal process: many of the voluminous motions and filings made by both the government and the defense were sealed from the public record. Judge O’Toole granted the secrecy and explained his rationale in a series of rulings. But they, too, are secret. Matthew Segal, an attorney with the A.C.L.U. of Massachusetts, told me that the scale of official secrecy in the case was “extremely high” and hard to justify, given that Tsarnaev was “the lone surviving member of a two-person cell.”

On April 8th, the jury convicted Tsarnaev of all thirty counts in the indictment. During the guilt phase, the defense had called only four witnesses, all technical experts, who demonstrated that the fingerprints on the bombmaking tools were Tamerlan’s, and that, according to cell-phone records, while Tamerlan was purchasing pressure cookers and BBs, Jahar was far away, at college. On cross-examination, Clarke and her colleagues showed that radical-Islamist material constituted only a fraction of Jahar’s Internet diet. (He most often visited Facebook.) Tweets by Jahar that the government had presented as indications of extremism were shown to be rap lyrics or references to Comedy Central shows. The





man who was carjacked by the brothers, Dung Meng, recalled Tamerlan boasting about bombing the marathon and shooting the M.I.T. police officer; Jahar was quiet, asking only if the car stereo could play music from his iPhone.

For the penalty phase, Clarke and her colleagues summoned more than forty witnesses to tell Jahar's life story. He and his parents had come to America in 2002, and were later joined by his two sisters and Tamerlan. The family had applied for political asylum, citing Russia's wars in Chechnya. The parents, Anzor and Zubeidat, were attractive and ambitious but volatile: Anzor, who found work as a mechanic, suffered from night terrors; Zubeidat was by turns smothering and neglectful. The Tsarnaevs lived in a cramped apartment in Cambridge, and their immigrant hopes gradually eroded. Jahar's sisters married young; each had a child, got divorced, and returned home. Tamerlan failed in his efforts at a professional boxing career, and at everything else he tried. He married an American, Katherine Russell, and they soon had a child. She and the baby joined the others in the apartment.

By 2010, Zubeidat and Tamerlan had become immersed in Islam—not the largely moderate form that is practiced in the Caucasus but a strain of Salafism that had taken root on the Internet. Tamerlan, who was unemployed, stayed at

home with his child while his wife worked, and he spent hours watching inflammatory videos of atrocities suffered by Muslims abroad. In 2012, he travelled to Dagestan for six months, hoping to participate in jihad, though he apparently whiled away most of his time in cafés, talking politics. (According to the *Boston Globe*, Tamerlan heard voices and may have suffered from undiagnosed schizophrenia.)

Clarke's portrait of Jahar Tsarnaev was reminiscent, in some ways, of the one she helped construct for Zacarias Moussaoui. In that trial, defense testimony focussed on the dislocation that Moussaoui had faced as a Moroccan in France, and on his tumultuous upbringing; his father, a boxer, was abusive, and ended up in a psychiatric institution. Moussaoui's sister, Jamilla, testified that he was the "sweetheart of the family." Jahar Tsarnaev was the sweetheart of his family—a doe-eyed, easygoing child who adored his older brother, made friends easily, and seemed to acculturate to American life more quickly than his relatives did. He did well in school, skipping the fourth grade and becoming captain of his high-school wrestling team. Several tearful teachers took the stand and described him as bright and gentle.

By the time he started college, however, his family was falling apart. His parents separated, and both eventually left the country. Tamerlan, meanwhile, was

becoming more radical, walking around Cambridge in the kind of flowing white robe one sees in Saudi Arabia.

Neither the government nor the defense claimed that the brothers were part of a larger conspiracy; rather, in Clarke's awkward phrasing, Tamerlan "self-radicalized" through the Internet. The question at the heart of the defense was whether Jahar did, too. In college, he spent evenings getting high and playing video games with friends. Photographs exhibit a painfully American banality: cinder-block dorm rooms, big-screen TVs, mammoth boxes of Cheez-Its. Several of Jahar's friends testified about his kindness. Whereas Tamerlan lectured anyone who would listen about U.S. imperialism and the plight of Muslims abroad, Jahar rarely discussed politics. Some of his close friends didn't even know that he was Muslim. The prosecution said that he was living a "double life." But it was hard to imagine, looking at a photograph of him lounging on a top bunk, how he hid a life of religious devotion from his dorm-mates.

The defense argued that Jahar didn't engineer the terrorist plot. Tamerlan bought the bomb materials, made the bombs, and shot Officer Collier. In Chechen culture, one defense expert testified, an older brother is a dominant personality whom the younger brother must obey. A cognitive scientist testified that teen-aged brains are impulsive, like cars with powerful engines and faulty brakes.

This line of argument echoed the successful defense in a 2002 case that Clarke was not involved in: the prosecution of Lee Malvo, who, at seventeen, had accompanied a deranged father figure, John Allen Muhammad, on a shooting spree around Washington, D.C., which left ten people dead. Muhammad was put to death, but Malvo got a life sentence. Like Malvo, Tsarnaev was young, had no history of violent conduct, and fell under the spell of a charismatic mentor. Malvo, his lawyer maintained, could "no more separate himself from John Muhammad than you could separate from your shadow." It was a Pied Piper defense, and Clarke was mounting a similar argument. One of Tsarnaev's teachers, whose husband had been his soccer coach, testified, "He's



*"I'm getting bitten, and it's not by tall bond traders with accents."*

very coachable. He would do what the coach said."

Zacarias Moussaoui, a genuine zealot, was given to outbursts during his court proceedings, in which he condemned America and the case against him. Jahar Tsarnaev sat silently at the defense table, occasionally reaching for a carafe of water to refill his attorneys' cups. There was such dissonance between the grotesque crime and the mild-mannered perpetrator that, outside the courtroom, an avid group of supporters, many of them young women, maintained that he must be the victim of a frameup. "It's a defense you don't often have recourse to in these types of cases: 'He was a good kid, one of ours,'" Carol Steiker, a death-penalty specialist at Harvard Law School, told me. "He also reads as white, which is very helpful in these kinds of cases."

Spectators in the courtroom could see mainly the back of Tsarnaev's head, but, in overflow rooms for the press, closed-circuit monitors afforded a better view. One of the cameras in the courtroom was positioned to approximate the judge's view from the bench. David Bruck objected that the camera violated the defense team's "zone of privacy," but the camera stayed, offering an intimate perspective of Tsarnaev's detachment. He whispered and sometimes smiled with his attorneys, but he avoided looking at the witnesses, instead examining his fingernails or doodling. "I really miss the person that I knew," one of his college friends, Alexa Guevara, said, through tears, on the stand. She tried mightily to catch his eye, but he would not meet her gaze.

Tsarnaev broke this mask of indifference only once. His aunt Patimat Suleimanova came from Dagestan to testify. But when she took the stand she was immediately convulsed by sobs. Tsarnaev dabbed tears from his eyes until she was escorted from the stand. This marked, in some ways, a promising development for the defense—a signal that the defendant had feelings, after all, and that his death would devastate his family. At the same time, it underscored Tsarnaev's implacability during weeks of harrowing testimony about the devastation he had caused.

Clarke, in her opening statement, said that Jahar's terrorist path was "created" and "paved by his brother." If he had fallen under the sway of a violent older sibling,

it seemed logical that Tsarnaev, after two lonely years in prison, might feel remorse. Of course, a defendant's posture in the courtroom is an imperfect proxy for his state of mind. But Tsarnaev's demeanor betrayed no contrition.

This was critical because, according to studies, capital juries are heavily influenced by whether or not the defendant shows remorse. To prove that Tsarnaev was untroubled by his crime, the prosecution presented a still image taken by a surveillance camera in a holding cell in the courthouse. The image was captured on the day of his arraignment, several months after the attacks. Tsarnaev wears orange scrubs and scowls at the camera, his middle finger raised. "This is Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, unconcerned, unrepentant, unchanged," one of the prosecutors said. The defense immediately moved to show the jury the video from which the still was taken, and it emerged that Tsarnaev had aimed other gestures at the camera, including a two-fingered gang sign, in the casual pose of a teenager on Instagram. The camera had a mirrored surface, and he carefully tousled his hair.

To rebut the idea that Tsarnaev was remorseless, Clarke played one final card. She summoned Sister Helen Prejean, who explained that, before the trial, the defense had brought her to Boston to meet Tsarnaev. Her first thought upon seeing him was "My God, he's so young." They met five times over the course of the trial, Prejean explained, and in one conversation they talked about the victims. According to Prejean, Tsarnaev said, "No one deserves to suffer like they did." She added, "I just had every reason to think that . . . he was genuinely sorry."

When Clarke first considered representing Susan Smith, she called Rick Kammen, a death-penalty lawyer she knew, for advice. "Every time you take one of these cases, you have to be prepared to see your client executed," Kammen said. Many lawyers try one capital case, then never do another. Those who persist often burn out, or turn to alcohol or drugs. Clarke's colleagues say that, to maintain her sanity, she relies on her husband, devoted friends, and wry humor. She still runs to clear her head.

The process of preparing a social history for a client is prone to artificial de-

terminism: decades-old tragedies are portrayed as harbingers of recent behavior. When I asked Clarke's friends and colleagues to explain why she is so devoted to what she does, there was a uniform flatness to their answers: Clarke is deeply compassionate, and has always been that way. But if Clarke were preparing her own social history she might underline one particular episode from her past.

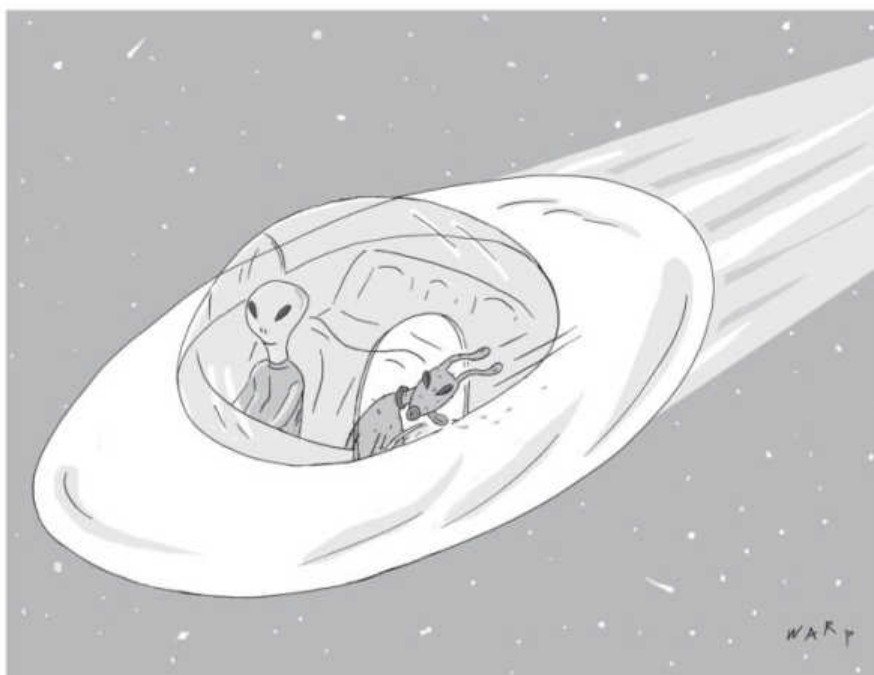
Her father, Harry Clarke, was a conservative Republican who wanted to impeach the Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren and was an early supporter of Senator Jesse Helms. The Clarke children were encouraged to debate ideas at the kitchen table, but there were limits. In 1972, Judy and her younger sister, Candy, told their mother, Patsy, that they intended to vote for George McGovern. Patsy was so shocked that she didn't tell their father. In 1987, when Judy was living in San Diego, Harry died, after the single-engine plane he was flying home from a business trip crashed, near Asheville. Clarke had been close to her father and never felt that being a defense attorney was incompatible with his principles. Three years after his death, she told the *Los Angeles Times* that she was an absolutist when it came to the rights guaranteed in the Constitution. "Yes, I'm a defense lawyer," she said. "But I think I have very conservative values."

Judy's older brother, Bruce, also became a lawyer, and Candy became a high-school teacher. Her younger brother, Mark, moved to Florida after college and became a lifeguard. In 1992, he told his mother that he was gay and dying of AIDS. Patsy, who considered herself a proper Southern conservative, was shocked, but she devoted herself to caring for him. Judy went to Florida to support Mark, and he died in the spring of 1994.

Upon Mark's death, Patsy grew frustrated that the family's old friend Jesse Helms had been blocking funding for AIDS research, claiming that gay men had brought the scourge upon themselves. Patsy later wrote a memoir, in which she recalls Judy telling her, "You ought to write to Senator Helms about Mark." Patsy did so, asking that he not "pass judgment on other human beings as 'deserving what they get.'"

Two weeks later, Helms replied. "I wish he had not played Russian roulette





in his sexual activity,” he wrote of Mark. “I have sympathy for him—and for you. But there is no escaping the reality of what happened.”

Patsy was so incensed that she launched a grassroots campaign, along with other mothers of AIDS victims, to oust Helms from the Senate. Judy also seems to have been galvanized. Several months after Mark’s death, she joined her first capital case, defending Susan Smith. “Judy was Judy before Mark died,” Tina Hunt said. “But it may have intensified her drive for justice and for accepting people for who they are.” Then she chuckled and added, “If *anything* could make Judy more intense.”

Watching Tsarnaev in court, I sometimes wondered if Clarke was trying to save someone who didn’t want to be saved. Perhaps he still envied Tamerlan’s martyrdom. In death-penalty work, clients often come to desire a swift end. They may be suicidal, or hopeless, or insane; they may have made a considered decision that death by lethal injection would be preferable to a lifetime of solitary confinement. Such clients, known as “volunteers,” present death-penalty lawyers with a dilemma. An attorney’s job is to advocate vigorously for a client’s interests. But there may come a point at which that duty diverges from

the imperative to save the client’s life.

In 2007, Clarke took the case of Joseph Duncan, a drifter who had kidnapped two children—Dylan and Shasta Groene—in Idaho, after using a hammer to murder their older brother, their mother, and her boyfriend. Clarke joined the defense late, after another attorney had left the case. According to Tina Hunt, who was in the Spokane office at the time, “The crime was so devastating that he could not emotionally handle it.” He was a “phenomenal trial lawyer,” Hunt said. “But he wasn’t Judy.”

After taking the two children to a remote campsite, Duncan had videotaped himself raping and torturing Dylan. He then forced Shasta to watch the video, before killing her brother in front of her, with a shotgun. Duncan was on a mountainside, about to bludgeon Shasta’s head with a rock, when it occurred to him, in what he later called “an epiphany,” that killing is wrong. He drove down the mountain with Shasta, and not long afterward a waitress at a local Denny’s recognized them and summoned the police.

Clarke spent hours talking with Duncan. She later characterized his ramblings as “head-spinning” and “crazy”—he seemed to have dissociative-identity disorder—but she remained patient. “Are you frustrated with me because I don’t

understand?” she would ask. Clarke planned to center her defense on the fact that Duncan had been locked up, at the age of sixteen, in a facility for adult sexual offenders. But Duncan refused to introduce any mitigating evidence about his childhood. Instead, he wanted to take full responsibility for his actions. He was eager to make sure that Shasta would not have to undergo the trauma of appearing on the stand. He wanted to plead guilty and waive his right to appeal. “Tell me you’re not on a suicide mission,” Clarke said to him, according to a subsequent deposition. She suggested to Duncan that if killing was wrong he should not allow the state to kill him. But it was no use. Clarke moved to withdraw from the case. “We are not gun-slingers who do the bidding of someone who does not have a rational understanding,” she told the judge. Duncan was subsequently sentenced to death. He is currently on death row in Indiana.

Since 1984, capital punishment has been illegal in Massachusetts. Nevertheless, under our federalist system, the Department of Justice can pursue a criminal sanction that a state has judged unconstitutional. Eighteen other states have banned or suspended the death penalty, and the Supreme Court has gradually narrowed the scope of who can receive the punishment, ruling out juvenile perpetrators and people with intellectual disabilities.

You might think that, in a liberal city like Boston, Tsarnaev’s lawyers would not have to address his moral culpability in order to save his life; it would be enough to attack capital punishment itself. In 1999, when Clarke defended the white supremacist Buford Furrow, she argued that the death penalty was unconstitutional. In the Kaczynski case, the defense wrote, “Evolving standards of decency will eventually convince the American public that it is simply wrong and immoral to kill people, regardless of whether the killing is done by an individual or the government.”

In Boston, as the penalty phase began, David Bruck made a dramatic case against the death penalty. He has worked as an attorney or an adviser on scores of capital cases. He showed the jurors a photograph of ADX, the federal maximum-security prison in Florence, Colorado,

where several of Clarke's former clients are held: a series of stark buildings nestled into barren, snow-covered terrain. It called to mind Siberia. If Tsarnaev was spared the death penalty, Bruck explained, he would live a life of near total isolation at ADX. Because of the Special Administrative Measures, he would have no contact with other inmates or the outside world.

If the jury delivered a death sentence, Bruck continued, its decision would surely be followed by more than a decade of appeals, each one accompanied by a new wave of publicity for Tsarnaev and pain for the victims. Only then—maybe—would he be executed. Supporters of the death penalty often argue that it brings “closure” to the victims, but Bruck's logic seemed unassailable: if you want a sense of finality, send him away. “No martyrdom,” he said. “Just years and years of punishment, day after day, while he grows up to face the lonely struggle of dealing with what he did.”

On April 17th, under the headline “TO END THE ANGUISH, DROP THE DEATH PENALTY,” the Boston *Globe* carried an open letter from Bill and Denise Richard. “The defendant murdered our 8-year-old son, maimed our 7-year-old daughter, and stole part of our soul,” they wrote. “We know that the government has its reasons for seeking the death penalty, but the continued pursuit of that punishment could bring years of appeals and prolong reliving the most painful day of our lives.” They urged prosecutors to accept a plea deal for a sentence of life without parole.

Some victims strenuously disagreed with this position. But the prosecution's most compelling witness was now begging to spare Tsarnaev's life. Hours after the letter was published, Carmen Ortiz, the U.S. Attorney in Massachusetts, reaffirmed her desire to pursue the death penalty. She was doing so, she said, on behalf of the victims.

Had the jury been selected from a representative sampling of Bostonians, there would have been little possibility of a death sentence. But jury selection in death-penalty cases involves a procedure known as “death qualification,” in which prospective jurors are questioned about their views on capital punishment, and anyone who opposes the practice on principle is disqualified. This makes a

certain amount of sense, because a death sentence must be unanimous; if a single juror objects from the outset, the whole proceeding might be a waste of time. In Alabama or Oklahoma, where there is broad support for capital punishment, it is easy to death-qualify a panel of jurors. But in Boston a jury that is death-qualified is also demographically anomalous: according to polls taken during the trial, sixty per cent of Americans favored executing Tsarnaev, but only fifteen per cent of Bostonians did.

During jury selection, a middle-aged restaurant manager was asked if she could deliver a death sentence. “I don't really feel that *I'm* sentencing someone,” she said. “It's like at work—I fire people, and I'm asked, ‘How can you do that?’ I'm not the one doing that. *They* did it. By *their* actions. Not coming to work, stealing, whatever.” Elisabeth Semel, the Berkeley professor, notes that, with a death-qualified jury, “you are starting out with a jury that is conviction-prone and death-prone, because if they weren't they wouldn't be sitting there.” The restaurant manager became the forewoman of the jury.

On a May morning, as gulls hung on the breeze in Boston Harbor, Clarke addressed the jury a final time. She dismissed the idea of Jahar as a radical, arguing that he had been in his brother's thrall. “If not for Tamerlan,” she said, the attack “would not have happened.” She played video of Jahar putting his backpack behind the Richard family. “He stops at the *tree*, not at the children,” she insisted, a little lamely. “It does not make it better, but let's not make his intent worse than it was.” Clarke called Tsarnaev a “kid” and “an adolescent drawn into a passion and belief of his older brother.” In his confession inside the boat, she argued, he was merely parroting the rhetoric of others. “He wrote words that had been introduced to him by his brother.”

At one point, Clarke nearly conceded the logic of capital punishment. “Dzhokar Tsarnaev is not the worst of the worst,” she said. “That's what the death penalty is reserved for.” Then again you could argue that if Tsarnaev wasn't among the worst of the worst Clarke would never have taken the case. And Clarke—who once defended someone

who slashed a pregnant woman's belly and strangled her to death in order to steal the baby from her womb—has devoted her career to the notion that even the very worst should be spared. But she knew that these jurors didn't oppose the death penalty, so she appealed to their sympathy, repeating the words “us” and “we,” reminding them that they were standing in judgment of one of their own. As her closing neared its crescendo, her normally casual demeanor assumed a frantic urgency, and she gesticulated—pounding her fist, slicing the air—as if she were conducting an orchestra. “Mercy is never earned,” Clarke said. “It's bestowed.”

Then William Weinreb approached the lectern for a rebuttal. “His brother made him do it,” he said. “That's the idea they've been trying to sell you.” Weinreb observed that Clarke, in her closing statement, had referred to Tamerlan “well over one hundred times.” But Tamerlan was not on trial, and the defense's evidence had actually revealed that Jahar Tsarnaev was a fortunate child whose family had loved him and given him opportunity. “He moved with his parents from one of the poorest parts of the world to the wealthiest,” Weinreb said. “They were looking for a better life, and they found it.” Weinreb calmly dismantled the social history that Clarke and her colleagues had constructed.

“The murders on Boylston Street were not a youthful indiscretion,” Weinreb said. Clarke had called the killings senseless, “but they made perfect sense to the defendant.” Even Prejean, Weinreb noted, was unpersuasive about Tsarnaev's sense of remorse. The sentiment he expressed to her was not so different from what he wrote in the boat: it was a pity when innocent people died, even if it was necessary. “That's a core terrorist belief,” Weinreb said.

Miriam Conrad and David Bruck both fumed and raised objections. Clarke just stared at Weinreb, her chin propped on her left fist, her thumb digging deeper and deeper into her cheek. Earlier, one of Weinreb's colleagues had cited Emerson: “The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be.” Now Weinreb assaulted the belief system upon which Clarke had staked her career. All of us, Weinreb said, should be judged on the basis of



our actions. Tsarnaev should be put to death “not because he’s inhuman but because he’s inhumane.”

Before the murderer Gary Gilmore was executed at Utah State Prison in 1976, bullets were distributed to the five-member firing squad; one of them was a blank. This dispersal of moral responsibility is a curious feature of our system of capital punishment: the message is that the state is doing the killing, and therefore no individual is culpable for the death. In lectures, Sister Helen Prejean rebuts this notion by saying, “If you really believe in the death penalty, ask yourself if you’re willing to inject the fatal poison.” In other words, we are all implicated when the state kills.

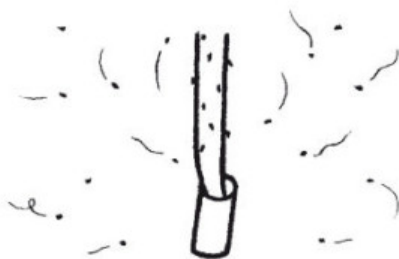
One common rationale for capital punishment is that it will deter others from committing awful crimes. But there is no evidence that this is the case. (Arthur Koestler once pointed out that when thieves were hanged in the village square other thieves flocked to the execution to pick the pockets of the spectators.) A second justification is that the most violent criminals, even if they are jailed for life, could still endanger others. The government labored to suggest that Tsarnaev might someday be transferred out of seclusion and into the general population at ADX. One defense witness, a former prison warden, observed that, in such an unlikely event, his greatest safety concern would be for Tsarnaev.

The remaining ground for capital punishment is retribution. In a 1957 essay, “Reflections on the Guillotine,” Albert Camus described retaliation as a “pure impulse” that is ingrained in human nature, passed down to us “from the primitive forests.” This does not mean, he argued, that it should be legal. “Law, by definition, cannot obey the same rules as nature. If murder is in the nature of man, the law is not intended to imitate or reproduce that nature. It is intended to correct it.” As Oliver Wendell Holmes put it, retribution is simply “vengeance in disguise.”

Before the jurors began to deliberate, they were issued a questionnaire that asked them to decide whether various “aggravating” and “mitigating” factors had been proved by the government and the defense. Though Judge O’Toole cautioned jurors not to simply tally the check

marks and arrive at an answer, the exercise retained an air of sterile arithmetic. Clarke reminded the jury that, however they completed their forms, each of them was making a moral judgment. “This is an individual decision for each of you,” she said. She could not let them think of the jury form the way the restaurant manager thought about errant employees, or the way the firing squad thought about that blank. As Clarke spoke, she looked straight at the forewoman, who glared back at her, arms folded across her chest.

After fourteen hours of deliberation, the jury returned with a death sentence. According to the jury forms, all but three of the jurors believed that, even without the influence of Tamerlan, Jahar would have carried out the attacks on his own. Only two believed that the defendant was remorseful. “Judy would probably say, if the public saw everything she sees, it would look at the client or the case differently,” David Bruck once remarked. But in this instance Clarke had failed to paint a picture of her young client that was moving enough to save him. It may be that she never found the key. During her closing, she said, with frank bewilderment, “If you expect me to have an answer, a simple, clean answer as to how this could happen, I don’t.” Judge O’Toole had warned the jurors not to read anything into the defendant’s manner in court, but Tsarnaev’s inscrutability appears to have hurt him. Most jurors de-



clined to speak with the press, but one of them told the *Daily Beast*, “My conscience is clear. . . . And I don’t know that he has one.”

Unknownst to that juror, and to the public in Boston, Tsarnaev had already expressed remorse for his actions. On June 24th, six weeks after the jury dispersed, Judge O’Toole presided over the formal sentencing of Tsarnaev, and Clarke made a fascinating remark. “There

have been comments over time with regard to Mr. Tsarnaev lacking remorse,” she said. “It’s incumbent upon us to let the court know that Mr. Tsarnaev offered to resolve this case without a trial.” Tsarnaev had not simply agreed to plead guilty before the trial, Clarke said; he had written a letter of apology. But it was never shared with the jury, because the government, under the terms of the Special Administrative Measures, had it sealed.

I spoke recently with Nancy Gertner, a former federal judge in Massachusetts who now teaches at Harvard. “This could have been an immediate plea,” she said. “He was prepared to cooperate with the government. Why go through with it all?” In Gertner’s view, there is “no legal justification” for the secrecy surrounding the proceedings, given that Tsarnaev did not appear to pose an ongoing threat. “The classification was based on a premise that this was an international security issue, which is a little dishonest,” she said. It seemed absurd that prosecutors had suppressed Tsarnaev’s letter of apology on the ground that releasing it could be unsafe. (A spokesperson for the prosecutors declined to comment on why the letter was suppressed.)

Gertner offered a hypothesis for why the Justice Department was intent on a death sentence: it might relate to the politics of Guantánamo. Supporters of the detention facility have long argued that American federal courts are not equipped to try terrorists. But here was a case in which a civilian federal court could deliver not just a guilty verdict but the death penalty. Numerous people have been convicted of terrorism in civilian courts since September 11th, but Tsarnaev is the first to receive a death sentence. Gertner said that the trial should not have been held in Massachusetts. If relocating was not appropriate in this case, she observed, when would it be? “They’ve essentially eliminated change of venue for anyone in the country,” she said. The whole trial, she concluded, “was theatre, as far as I was concerned.”

A second juror, a twenty-three-year-old named Kevan Fagan, recently spoke to the press. Asked by the radio station WBUR about the Richard family’s letter opposing the death penalty, he said, “If I had known that, I probably—I probably would change my vote.”

Before Judge O’Toole could deliver

the death sentence, Clarke said, “Mr. Tsarnaev is prepared to address the court.” He rose, next to her, wearing a dark jacket and a gray button-down shirt. “I would like to begin in the name of Allah, the exalted and glorious, the most gracious, the most merciful,” he said. He spoke in a thick accent that sounded vaguely Middle Eastern. (Before the bombing, he had sounded more conventionally American.) “This is the blessed month of Ramadan, and it is the month of mercy from Allah to his creation, a month to ask forgiveness of Allah,” he continued.

Turning to Clarke and her colleagues, Tsarnaev said that he wanted to thank his attorneys. “I cherish their company,” he said. “They’re lovely companions.” Then he thanked the jury that had sentenced him to death. The Prophet Muhammad, he noted, had said that “if you are not merciful to Allah’s creation, Allah will not be merciful to you.” Tsarnaev went on, “I’d like to now apologize to the victims.” He recalled that after the bombings he began to learn about the injured and the dead. “Throughout this trial, more of those victims were given names.” When the witnesses testified, they conveyed “how horrendous it was, this thing I put you through.”

Tsarnaev did not look at the many victims who had gathered in the courtroom. He stared straight ahead, his hands clasped around his belt buckle. Clarke sat motionless, watching him. “I am sorry for the lives that I’ve taken, for the suffering that I’ve caused,” he said. He prayed that the victims might find “healing,” and he asked Allah “to have mercy upon me and my brother and my family.” Allah, he said, “knows best those deserving of his mercy.”

Tsarnaev spoke in precisely the language of religious devotion that the prosecutors might have predicted. But people often change considerably between the ages of nineteen and twenty-one. He had spent those two years in solitary confinement, with plenty of time to ponder his actions—and to read the Koran. Throughout the trial, Tsarnaev had been a cipher, and observers wanted him to demonstrate that he understood the gravity of his misdeeds. But I wondered, as he addressed the court, if Tsarnaev was mature enough—or distant enough in time from the bombing and



from the death of his brother—to have arrived at a firm evaluation of what he’d done. The Koran, like other holy books, can be read to condemn such acts of violence or to condone them. On a given night, Tsarnaev might fall asleep believing that he would be rewarded in the afterlife, and the next night believing that he would be punished.

Tsarnaev will not be executed anytime soon. Since 1988, seventy-five defendants have been given the federal death penalty, but only three have been put to death. Appeals drag out for decades. Until a California judge ruled capital punishment unconstitutional last year, death-row prisoners there were seven times more likely to die of natural causes than of execution. (A death sentence, the judge observed, should really be called “life in prison with the remote possibility of death.”) The very scenario that Bill and Denise Richard hoped to avoid—the appeals, the publicity, the endless replay of the city’s trauma in the interests of retributive justice—will come to pass. Clarke has been known to say, of a death sentence that has not yet led to execution, “This case has a few miles to go.”

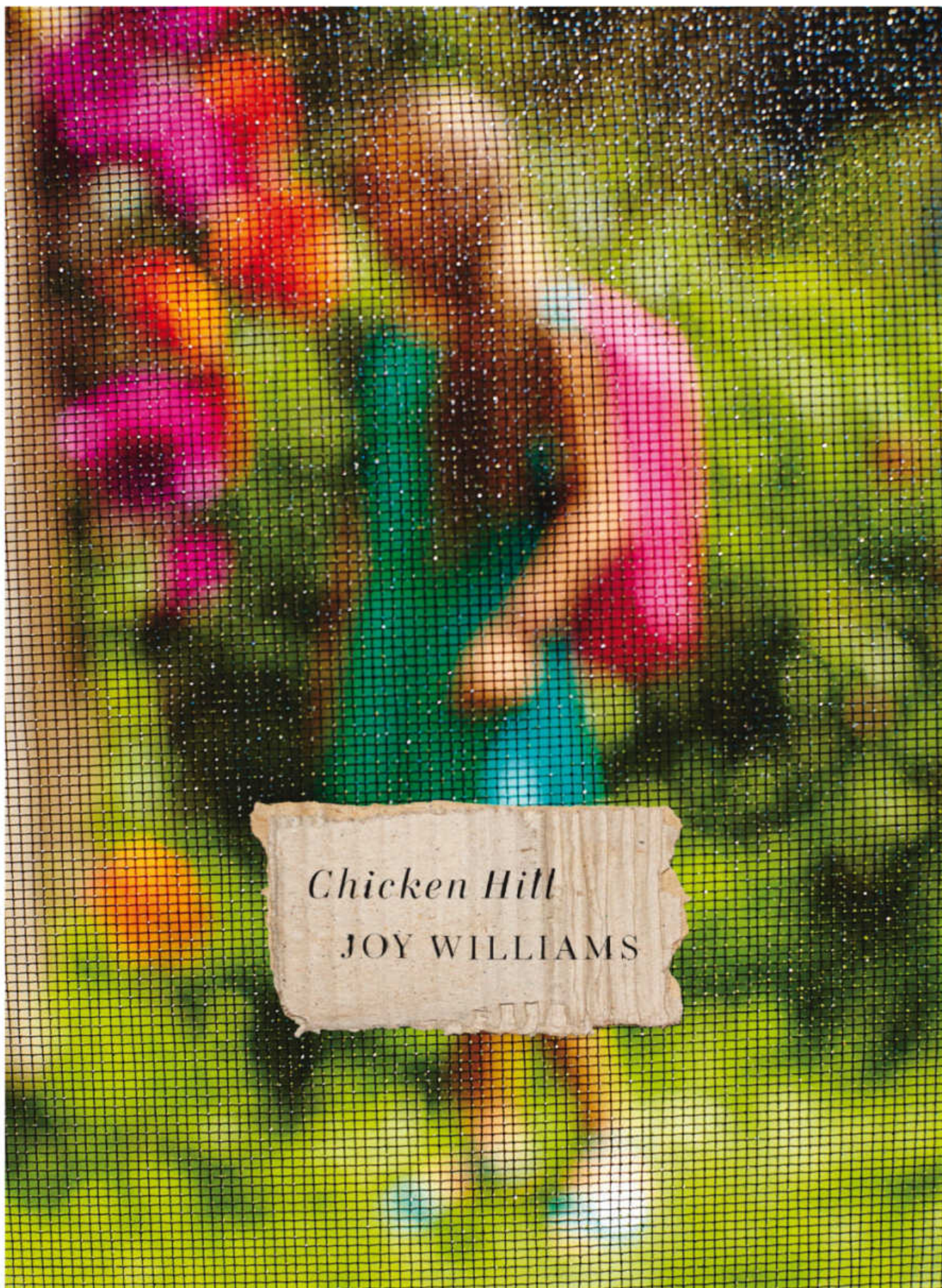
Clarke’s friends say that the loss has been devastating to her. In death-penalty work, Elisabeth Semel told me, you

talk not about losing a case but about losing a client. When it happens, she said, “you suffer, and you have to figure out how to pick yourself up.” Clarke, she pointed out, “has never experienced this before.” Tina Hunt, noting that Clarke and her husband don’t have kids, said, “To some degree, these clients are her children.”

Clarke’s friend Rick Kammen told me a story about Millard Farmer, who has represented scores of capital defendants in the South: “Millard would say, ‘Everyone has a certain number of cases in them. You need to quit one trial early.’ And it does take its toll on you, this work.” But without exception the people who know Clarke agree that this will not be her last case—she will pick herself up and keep fighting. Last month, Clarke and her colleagues filed a motion for a retrial, maintaining, once again, that the case should not have been tried in Boston. Bruck recently agreed to represent Dylann Roof, who is accused of murdering nine people in June at a black church in Charleston; Clarke could yet join him in that defense.

Tsarnaev concluded his courtroom remarks with a few final encomiums to Allah. Then he sat stiffly and waited for Judge O’Toole to deliver the death sentence. Clarke reached out and placed her hand on his back. ♦





TYPE BY GABRIELE WILSON



She didn't know what had possessed her to participate in such a thing. A little boy had been run over by a sheriff's deputy, and there was a memorial fundraiser at the Barbed Wire, a biker bar in a somewhat alarming part of town, and Ruth had gone and bought a beer and put thirty dollars into an empty terrarium, for funeral expenses. The place was loud and crowded, and she was given a plate with a tamale on it. Outside, someone had brought a pony and was providing pony rides for the dead boy's friends. No one spoke to her directly, but she learned that the boy's name was Hector and that his father was suing the sheriff's department.

Good, Ruth thought.

But Hector's death, it seemed, was Hector's fault. He had run into the street against the light. His fault, against the light—the details were so paltry. Ruth could have told Hector's father that he would find no satisfaction with his lawsuit, but she never returned to the Barbed Wire, where she might have found him, to express this belief. It was a tough little place. Going there had been one of the last journeys she had taken, though, of course, she did not know this at the time. It had been difficult to find. The closer she got to it the more frequently she'd had to ask for directions. People had assumed that she was looking for something else and had not been as helpful as they might have been.

None of Ruth's friends knew about her excursion to the little fellow's memorial, which, Ruth had to remind herself, had been scarcely a memorial at all but a fund-raiser, which she had respectfully participated in, though why she had given the curious amount of thirty dollars was a puzzle. It was probably all she'd had in her purse at the time—all she ever seemed to have in her purse. No one had spoken on behalf of the boy, and there hadn't been a single photograph of him there, not even a duplicate of the poor one that had appeared in the newspaper, cropped from a group of people, it seemed, his little face shaded by a preposterously large cowboy hat and quite blurry.

It was probably just coincidence that a child appeared not long after that. This one, a girl, belonged to the doctor who lived nearby in a house painted a prominent aubergine. The house had

once been invisible from Ruth's veranda, or what she called her veranda, but the doctor had removed a stand of cottonwoods in order to install solar panels, and now she could make out a sliver of the sprawling place. The removal had been modestly controversial, but supporters of the doctor's actions had argued that the trees were running on fumes, anyway, and, being as starved and delusional as they were, could be dangerous. She supposed the fools were talking about memory—the trees' memory of some water source that had now dried up.

Greetings between Ruth and the child had never been exchanged before. Nor were they now, exactly.

It was a hot day, as all the days were, and Ruth was on her veranda, eating a tuna-fish sandwich. She seldom ate tuna-fish sandwiches, because she found them an uncomfortable physical experience. After a few swallows, she felt as if she were having a heart attack. There was the tightness in her chest, her esophagus constricting, resisting passage, her oppressive baffled alarm. It was as if the splendid and courageous giant of the oceans were rising up in horror, disputing what had been done to it, and why should it not. . . .

Putting the sandwich aside, Ruth took large gulps of air and then small ones, trying to restore order to her thrashing chest. The girl watched her gravely. Ruth suspected that she was there to request permission to play in the gully behind her house, which Ruth considered an attractive nuisance, though it was by no means attractive. Indeed, it was more like a ravine, a dark peculiarity, than a gully. But the child did not request permission, which Ruth wouldn't have granted anyway.

Instead she said, "I would like to draw you in plain air."

"No, thanks," Ruth said.

"Do you have dogs?"

"I do."

"May I see them?"

"No," Ruth said.

"You used to have dogs. To reassure you, I could show you some work I've done in the past."

She was not an appealing child, but she didn't seem mentally deficient or malformed, either. Still, she was something of a runt, made more runtlike by

the enormous backpack she wore. From this pink, somewhat smelly apparatus she extracted several pieces of construction paper.

"These aren't good at all!" Ruth exclaimed. She was sincerely dismayed.

"I'm just beginning," the child said. "I should be encouraged."

"Not by me, I'm afraid," Ruth said.

"Do you give blood?"

"What do you mean?"

"Do you ever give blood?"

"No," Ruth said.

"You should. Only thirty-eight per cent of the population is eligible to give blood, and only eight per cent of them actually donate. The need for blood is constant and ongoing."

"Maybe I'm not eligible."

"I bet you are. You probably are."

"I'm old. I need my blood."

Was this what they talked about at the doctor's house—blood? And the efficient avidity of those hideous solar slabs?

Ruth had no children but many friends. Or she thought she had many friends. They stood up pretty well to her requirements, but sometimes they didn't. Actually, she could probably count fewer friends now than she'd had even a year ago.

As for children, though her experience with them was limited, this one here seemed a doozy. She wondered if the girl had ever encountered little Hector, but quickly dismissed the possibility. The two travelled in different circles, lived in separate worlds, the doctor's daughter and the felon's son—for it had been disclosed that Hector's father had a rap sheet as long as your arm, though he hadn't done anything recently.

That backpack needed to be washed and thoroughly aired. "Would you like some of my old jewelry to play with?" Ruth surprised herself by saying.

"I guess," the child said.

"You go away now, and when you come back in a few months, say, I'll give you some jewelry."

"I'll come back tomorrow."

"That's so soon!" Ruth protested. "But all right. The day after tomorrow. The important thing is to go away now."

Ruth retreated inside and watched the child trudge back to the aubergine house, the sliver of which was so



unpleasantly visible. The backpack all but eclipsed her. It must be quite heavy, Ruth thought, or something.

When the child appeared again, Ruth was back on her veranda, staring without much interest at her right hand, which had recently completed a letter of condolence to her mechanic's widow. As a rule, the mechanic had not accepted Toyotas, but he had made an exception for Ruth, and though he had worked on her car with some indifference and disdain, he'd kept it running, and at a fair price. People were dying right and left around Ruth. Death was picking up the pace. Two poets she had never met but read with great pleasure were taken on the same day. Her pediatricist had died, and what would Ruth do without her unjudgmental services? It was so easy to let oneself go.

"You're here for the jewelry, I suppose," Ruth said.

"I'd forgotten about the jewelry. But O.K."

Ruth had actually gone through her jewelry some time ago, but she was still amazed at how much of it she had. She could remember the provenance of only a fraction of it.

"Provenance," the girl said. "That's an interesting word. What does it mean?"

Ruth wasn't aware that she had uttered the word aloud, though there was no reason not to, it being a perfectly benign word.

The child was paler than Ruth remembered and scrawnier than ever. The pink backpack could quite possibly weigh more than she did.

"Do you really need that thing?" Ruth inquired. "Doesn't your mother ever wash it?"

"The doctor?"

Ruth supposed her own question had been merely rhetorical.

"Bring it up here, take everything out of it, and I'll scrub it with a good bar of soap." The thought of some of her jewelry (for she had no intention of giving the girl all of it) being lowered into that stinking sack prompted her to action. Also, she was curious as to what could be in the massive thing.

The child hopped up the steps, unstrapped herself, and began unzipping the backpack's numerous pockets. This took some time.

There was nothing. It held nothing.

Ruth decided that she didn't want to tackle the problem with a good bar of soap. It was all right. Whatever. Sometimes you try to fix something and it ends up more broken than ever. Or broken in a different way.

"You don't even have your drawings in there. What happened to your drawings?"

"I decided that was the wrong approach. What would you say your discomfort level is right now, on a scale of one to ten? One being your most comfortable or least uncomfortable, of course."

"I'm quite comfortable, thank you," Ruth said.

"Mine's around a six."

"To be honest, perhaps mine as well."

Neither chose to elaborate on these disclosures.

A little breeze wound past them. Ruth remembered that breeze and was always grateful when it reappeared. The veranda was somewhat oppressive and in need of paint. Portions of the floor had rotted through, and you had to stay away from those.

"Can I see your dogs?"

"Not today," Ruth said.

"Thomas Aquinas said that friendship between humans and animals is impossible."

"That's idiotic. I've never heard of anything more ridiculous."

"What could he have been thinking, right?" The child was hunched into her backpack again. "Once you're dead, you shouldn't be read."

"Well, I wouldn't go that far," Ruth said.

"I have brothers and sisters, you know. A whole mess of them."

"Really? I haven't been aware of them. I mean, I haven't seen them."

"Just me."

"What?"

"You've just seen me."

"Yes," Ruth said.

Ruth thought she'd walk up to the doctor's house. Take a good look. Figure this thing out. Get to the bottom of it. She dressed as well as she could, for the weather was every which way; it was hard to know. First dry and hot, then such humidity that it was difficult to breathe. She selected a skirt and blouse, a sweater. Her closet was stuffed with

things she hadn't put on in years. She pulled out a pair of shoes that were velvety with mildew. One more wear and then out they'd go, she decided.

She ate a bowl of cereal. The milk had gone bad. Sometimes the refrigerator took pride in keeping things cool and crisp and sometimes it didn't seem to care.

She began cautiously. The way was slippery, greasy almost, and tipped upward toward the aubergine house. The solar panels lay there, ruthless and withholding. The house was silent and looked pretty much the way it always had to Ruth. She hadn't really examined it before, but scrutiny afforded her nothing new. Other than its perplexing color and the depressing row of stumps on its southern border it was unexceptional. The child did not appear; nor did any "mess" of others—not that Ruth would have been surprised if she were told by a responsible party that they didn't exist. The girl was prone to enlarge on the truth, and her knowledge was exaggeratedly spotty, certainly.

Ruth tried to think of herself at that age. It was winter, and she was sliding down Chicken Hill on a piece of cardboard. No one had real sleds with runners. Everyone had a piece of cardboard. It was called Chicken Hill because it ended at the road. You had to know what you were doing. She'd been a far more robust child than this one, and not as humorless or demanding. Though the girl was demanding only of her time so far, which wasn't much or was everything, depending on how you looked at it.

Chicken Hill, Chicken Hill, what a place! The world! She could feel the purity of its cold core and see the slick ice shining. Her sled had once been a carton that held gallon jugs of maple syrup. It was so strong—the finest, fastest board on Chicken Hill. . . .

The sounds of children laughing and screaming faded, and she found herself standing dumbly before the doctor's house, which exhibited no sign of life whatsoever. She turned and made her way down the street again to her own unkempt home. She saw this clearly: the place needed some fluffing up. But she had five dogs—there was a lot of wear and tear. More than five would have brought her to the attention of the

authorities. “Keep the authorities at bay as long as you are able” was her motto. On the steps she paused and kicked off the foul shoes. She opened the door, hoping the dogs wouldn’t knock her over in ecstatic greeting. They had no idea of their size and were always so glad to see her.

But the dogs were not there. They had vanished as though they’d never been, along with their bowls and beds. That last detail, that their belongings were gone, too, gave her hope that, despite appearances, a cruelty had not occurred.

Naturally, Ruth was heartbroken. She loved her dogs. If such a thing could happen, anything could happen. Someone might suggest that she had not had the dogs at the same time—after all, five was a lot to handle at her age, and they’d been big dogs, too—but had a succession of dogs over the years. But that would have been mean and not helpful in the least.

You can’t live a life that’s no longer your own.

Which was a truth that surely didn’t apply only to her, for many must feel they are living lives that they no longer inhabit, just as sometimes the tears you shed seem to come from the eyes of another.

Ruth was concerned that the child would ask to see the dogs, as she usually did, but she did not. Of course, Ruth could have said “No” or “Not today” once again, but it wouldn’t have been the same.

“One of my classmates died,” the girl announced. “She was in my grade at school.”

“And what grade is that?” Ruth asked, quite irrelevantly, she knew. Her voice had become faint with disuse. If it hadn’t been for the child’s visits she might have lost it altogether, and the visits were becoming less reliable. Their connection was wavering; Ruth could feel it.

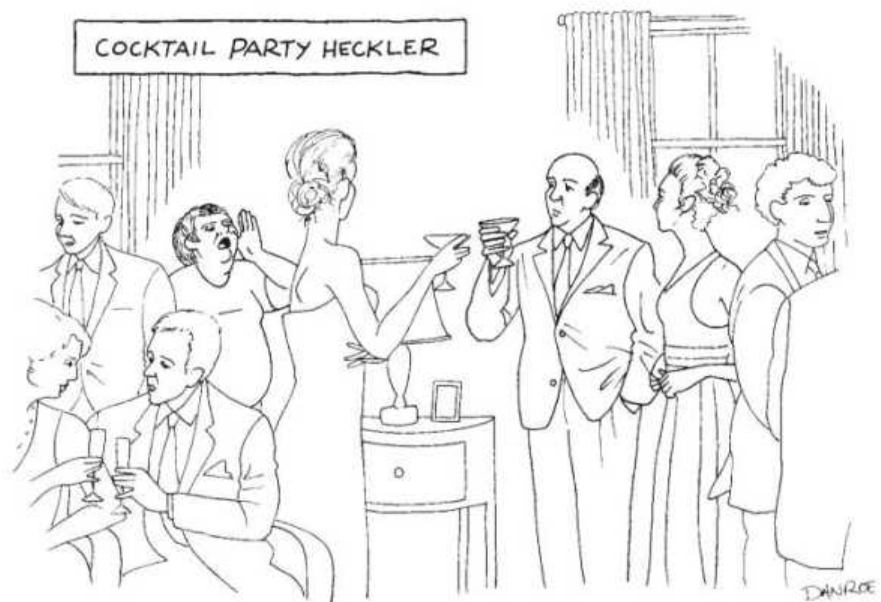
“The second. She had a rare form of cancer. They said they’d never seen such a cancer before, behaving the way it did.”

“Oh, they’re always saying that,” Ruth said impatiently.

“So many people came to her funeral. You’d think she’d taken a bullet for a senator or something.”

“You must be sad. It’s quite sad.”

“I know,” the girl said piously.



*“You call that a bon mot?”*

“Death’s got the bit in her teeth these days, I’d say.”

Ruth saw it then suddenly, as she would a picture, her horse, Abdiel. She would ride him on Chicken Hill in the summer, when the grass was high and smelled so sweet—grass could no longer smell as sweet. He was a big horse, probably too big for Ruth as a child, but they seemed to have an understanding, the two of them. Abdiel. Her mother and father had named him for the angel in “Paradise Lost”—“faithful found,/ Among the faithless, faithful only he.”

They had loved books; their house was full of books, all in other hands now, or worse, the books and pictures and animals. Ruth hadn’t been much of a reader herself. As a child, she’d wanted to possess herself, only herself. This was her duty. Yet she was aware that any moment could take away the assurance that this was possible. Her mother and father had not been very sensible. They were bohemians, romantics, clever and hungry and bright, believers in the wild freedoms that life bestows and which time and death are so eager to unsustain.

Her father had said that Abdiel looked like Tolstoy’s horse, the one in the famous photograph, black and spirited, his gleaming flesh forever rippling and

shuddering, as though grazed by an unseen hand, as they galloped on Chicken Hill—Chicken Hill, what a place! The world!

“I believe,” the girl said, “and it saddens me to say this, but I believe we’ve come to the end of our options here.”

“Have I told you about the horse, my horse, Abdiel?”

“You have,” the girl said.

“Oh my, I did? Because I haven’t thought about him in ever so long. And he was so real, such a living force, my determinant.”

“Quite real,” the child agreed. “He was the last real thing, I think.”

“Not a piece of harmless cardboard, not a scrap of my imagining.”

“Imagination only fails us in the end, when the stories we tell ourselves have to stop. You don’t mind me saying that I’m going, do you? The doctor’s packing us all up. We’re going away.”

“Where?” Ruth managed, but she didn’t hear her voice saying anything. Her voice had nothing to say.

“Who knows? No one tells me anything.”

Ruth was almost happy, getting to the bottom of it, for she felt that she had. The corners of her poor veranda were dissolving into shadow. She didn’t see the child leave her. She didn’t even see herself leaving, having just, at last, gone. ♦



# THE CRITICS



A CRITIC AT LARGE

## BODY COUNT

*Engulfed by crime, many blacks once agitated for more police and harsher penalties.*

BY KELEFA SANNEH

One day last fall, Rudy Giuliani, the former mayor of New York, appeared on “Meet the Press” to talk about the tense relationship between many African-American communities and the police departments charged with protecting them. In Ferguson, Missouri, the governor had declared a state of emergency as a grand jury considered whether to indict Darren Wilson, the white officer who shot and killed Michael Brown, an unarmed African-American. (In the end, Wilson was not indicted.) Chuck Todd, the host, asked about white officers patrolling African-American neighborhoods, but Giuliani wanted to talk about crime, not punishment. “I find it very disappointing that you’re not discussing the fact that ninety-three per cent of blacks in America are killed by other blacks,” he said, adding, “It is the reason for the heavy police presence in the black community.” The next day, on Fox News, Giuliani said that protesters who chanted “Black lives matter!” should be supporting police officers, not demonizing them. He suggested that the people who really valued black lives were people like him, who worked to reduce the African-American murder rate. “When I came into office, thousands of blacks were being killed every year,” he said. “By the time I left office, it was down to about two hundred.”

These comments inspired a backlash, but they were not, in themselves, surprising. Giuliani has never evinced much sympathy for critics of the po-

lice; in 2007, when he launched his Presidential campaign, his law-and-order approach helped make him, for a time, the most popular candidate in either party. But the national mood has grown less punitive, and when Giuliani made his remarks last year few allies emerged to support him. Many Republicans, including John Boehner, the Speaker of the House, now say that they support criminal-justice reform; Jeb Bush has signed a reform pledge affirming that prison sentences are “not the solution for every type of offender.” And, among Democrats, fears of being labelled soft on crime seem to have subsided since the nineteen-nineties. As First Lady, Hillary Clinton called for “tougher prison sentences for repeat offenders” while campaigning for her husband’s 1994 crime bill; the law instituted “three strikes and you’re out” sentences, and the federal-prison population almost doubled over the next ten years. But in Clinton’s current Presidential campaign she calls for reforming the police and ending “mass incarceration.” In response to pressure from protesters, she has used the phrase that has come to signify outrage at police brutality: “Black lives matter.”

This summer, the Black Lives Matter movement got a literary manifesto, in the form of Ta-Nehisi Coates’s “Between the World and Me” (Spiegel & Grau), a slender but deeply resonant book that made its debut atop the *Times* best-seller list. Coates, a writer for *The Atlantic*, has been chronicling recent

police killings, and he has responded with a polemic, in the tradition of James Baldwin, that takes the form of a lyrical letter to his fourteen-year-old son. Coates lists Michael Brown alongside other recent victims: Eric Garner, John Crawford, Tamir Rice, Marlene Pinnock. He writes, “You know now, if you did not before, that the police departments of your country have been endowed with the authority to destroy your body.” And he reminds his son that this destruction is so often unpunished as to be tacitly sanctioned:

The destroyers will rarely be held accountable. Mostly they will receive pensions. And destruction is merely the superlative form of a dominion whose prerogatives include friskings, detentions, beatings, and humiliations.

He means to confirm what his son suspects: that the shocking stories in the news are not anomalous; that police abuse is just another manifestation of the violence that has afflicted black people in America ever since slavery; that officers who kill are not rogues but, rather, enforcers of a brutal social order. One of the most severe lines in the book is also one of the most frequently quoted: “In America, it is traditional to destroy the black body—it is heritage.”

Four decades ago, a number of black leaders were talking in similarly urgent terms about the threats to the black body. The threats were, in the words of one activist, “cruel, inhuman, and ungodly”: black people faced the prospect not just of physical assault and murder but of “genocide”—the horror of slavery, reborn in a new guise. The activist who said this was Oberia D. Dempsey, a Baptist pastor in Harlem, who carried a loaded revolver, the better to defend himself and his community. Dempsey’s main foe was not the police and the prisons; it was drugs, and the criminal havoc wreaked by dealers and addicts.

Dempsey is the most vivid character in “Black Silent Majority” (Harvard), a provocative new history by Michael Javen Fortner, a professor of urban studies who wants to complicate our understanding of crime and punishment in black America. He points out that while African-Americans have long been disproportionately arrested and incarcerated



*The political scientist Michael Javen Fortner argues that black Americans helped to create the “carceral state” that now victimizes them.*

ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN STAUFFER

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for committing crime, they have also, for just as long, been disproportionately victimized by it. His focus is New York in the nineteen-sixties and early seventies, when crime rates shot up, creating a demand in African-American communities for more police officers, more arrests, more convictions, and longer prison sentences. The book begins near the end, on a January day in 1973, when Dempsey joined Governor Nelson Rockefeller at a press conference in support of what became known as the Rockefeller drug laws—a passel of anti-drug statutes that helped make New York a mass-incarceration pioneer, increasing the number of “friskings, detainings, beatings, and humiliations” that Coates writes about.

Like many scholars and activists, Fortner is profoundly disturbed by our modern system of criminal justice, calling mass incarceration “a glaring and dreadful stain on the fabric of American history.” But he thinks this history is incomplete if it ignores what he calls “black agency”: he wants us to see African-Americans not merely as victims of politics but as active participants in it, too. At a moment of growing concern about how our criminal-justice system harms African-Americans, Fortner seeks to show that African-American leaders, urged on by members of the community, helped create that system in the first place.

Last year, Coates used his blog to host an online book club devoted to Michelle Alexander’s unsparing “*The New Jim Crow*,” which came out in 2010 and is still finding new readers. Alexander is a law professor at Ohio State who was radicalized by her time at the American Civil Liberties Union, where she battled racial profiling. She eventually concluded that bias was inherent in the criminal-justice system, and that the system relegated African-Americans to second-class citizenship. The book’s focus was the war on drugs, which helped produce this country’s enormous prison population. She noted that President Reagan made fighting drugs a priority even before anyone was talking about the crack-cocaine epidemic of the nineteen-eighties, and she showed that penalties were disproportionately applied to African-Americans,

even though blacks and whites used and sold drugs at roughly equal rates. She argued, convincingly, that our punitive solution to the trade in illegal drugs was an overreaction, and one that would never have been tolerated if more of its victims had been white. She urged activists to fight back in explicitly racial terms, demanding that prison rolls be slashed and police departments remade, not merely in the name of pragmatic reform but in the name of black liberation. In many ways, the Black Lives Matter movement is an answer to her call.

Coates shares Alexander’s skepticism about law-and-order rhetoric, and he is especially critical of what he has called the “Gospel of Giuliani,” which parries complaints about police and prisons with scary statistics about black people killing black people. In Coates’s view, the term “black-on-black crime” ignores the fact that most violent crime is intraracial, and also obscures the government policies that gave rise to segregated African-American neighborhoods and their high crime rates. “To yell ‘black-on-black crime’ is to shoot a man and then shame him for bleeding,” he writes. The formulation, he believes, encourages us to imagine that something is wrong with black people, instead of seeing that something is wrong with America.

Coates writes with a preacher’s sensitivity to the rhythms and patterns of language, and of history, too, which means that he slips almost imperceptibly between piercing outrage and something close to fatalism. In his previous book, “*The Beautiful Struggle*,” Coates described how his boyhood was shaped by his father, Paul Coates, an independent scholar and publisher whose booklist is a bibliography of black liberation. Theirs was not a religious household, and Coates has kept faith with faithlessness, which helps explain his profound distaste for the notion that African-American stories must be redemption stories—what, exactly, makes us think that we shall overcome, some day? “Perhaps struggle is all we have because the god of history is an atheist, and nothing about his world is meant to be,” Coates tells his son in the new book, by way of explaining the importance of fighting a system that can

scarcely be fought, let alone beaten.

Alexander has been accused, credibly, of underplaying the importance and the cost of crime. (Her book begins with the example of Jarvis Cotton, one of more than two million African-Americans who are ineligible to vote because of a felony conviction. She does not mention that Cotton was convicted of murder for the killing of a seventeen-year-old during a mugging.) Coates, though, writes eloquently about common crime, especially in “*The Beautiful Struggle*.” Readers who come to his first book by way of his second may be taken aback not only by its seriocomic tone and hip-hop-inflected language but also by its vivid evocation of Coates’s boyhood on the gruelling streets of Baltimore. In one memorable passage, he paid dark tribute to the guys from a West Baltimore housing project called Murphy Homes, summoning the fear he felt and the reverence, too:

Murphy Homes beat niggers with gas nozzles. Murphy Homes split backs and poured in salt. Murphy Homes moved with one eye, flew out on bat wings, performed dark rites atop Druid Hill.

“*The Beautiful Struggle*” was, no less than its successor, a book about black bodies in peril, although the threats tended to come from within the community. In this world, the police were a menacing presence—after Coates got in trouble in school, his father gave him a beating, asking his mother, “Who would you rather do this: me or the police?”—but Coates seems to have been more concerned about the Murphy Homes boys and the others like them. At one point, he noted that in 1986 there were two hundred and fifty murder victims in Baltimore. “That year,” he wrote, “my man Craig was butchered on his way home from work.” It was a piercing moment, but readers expecting an elegy got, instead, a few terse biographical sentences, as if Coates were underscoring the ghastly banality of this loss.

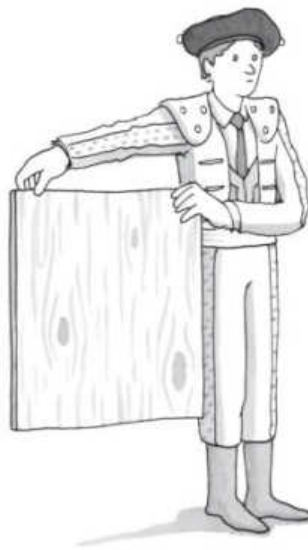
In “*Between the World and Me*,” Coates shifts his focus from the neighborhood to the nation. The book is given shape and weight by the story of another friend who was killed: Prince Jones, a college acquaintance, shot by an African-American police officer

while sitting, unarmed, in his jeep, which apparently matched the description of one driven by a suspect in the theft of a police gun. Coates emphasizes the violence done to the black body to help us see the physical abuse that undergirds broad structures of oppression. Of course, Craig had a body, too, and it was destroyed in a manner far more commonplace. In “Between the World and Me,” the “black body” refers, as well, to the black body politic. When a police officer shoots and kills an unarmed African-American—especially when the officer isn’t charged with a crime, as Michael Brown’s killer was not, and Prince Jones’s killer was not—he is, Coates wants us to understand, proving the continued existence of a system in which African-Americans are victimized by state power and are powerless to demand accountability. A black college student is a body, but he is also a citizen, and this explains why, even in violent neighborhoods, some kinds of violence seem, to Coates, particularly salient: because they threaten not just the body of the victim but his citizenship, too.

Michael Javen Fortner grew up in Brownsville, Brooklyn, and his boyhood sounds even more chaotic than Coates’s. “I was only a couple of years old when one of my brothers was stabbed to death,” he writes. “I do not remember him, but the pain and sorrow of that day stayed in my home like accumulated dust.” He thinks that analysts like Alexander, in their eagerness to indict systemic injustice, sometimes downplay the “black agony” that characterizes many neighborhoods where brutal crime is ubiquitous. Black political activists present history in ways that emphasize racial solidarity, but Fortner says that the Brownsville he remembers was “a community at war with itself”:

I recall hearing “That’s what he gets” every time one of “our youngsters” was arrested. I recall hearing about fathers calling the cops on sons and mothers throwing daughters out onto the street. I remember that from the pews of my Pentecostal church sanctified working- and middle-class African Americans distinguished between saints and sinners.

It was Richard Nixon who popularized the phrase “silent majority,” as a way of insisting that the countercul-



Hankin

tural masses protesting the Vietnam War constituted nothing more than an outspoken minority. In positing the existence of a “black silent majority,” Fortner draws on the work of Charles V. Hamilton, an African-American political scientist and the author, with Stokely Carmichael, of “Black Power.” In 1970, Hamilton published an article in the *Times Magazine* about the mass of black Americans who were concerned about crime. “They want police protection, not police persecution,” he wrote, “and because they believe that the incidence of the latter is greater than the former, they believe the present law-enforcement systems must be viewed suspiciously, rather than optimistically.” In an essay about Harlem, James Baldwin wrote, “The only way to police a ghetto is to be oppressive.” He portrayed the officers as an occupying force: “Their very presence is an insult, and it would be, even if they spent their entire day feeding gumdrops to children.”

Plenty of citizens and politicians made a different calculation, concluding that the risks of persecution were outweighed by the urgent need for protection. In nineteen-sixties Harlem, heroin addiction was increasing steeply, and street crime had become so common that some churches cancelled evening services, to protect parishioners

from being set upon as they returned home. Drug crime strained the relationship between black leaders and white liberal allies, who wanted to combat the drug trade with medical treatment, not criminal penalties. In 1962, Oberia Dempsey led a coalition of civic leaders who asked President Kennedy to “mobilize all law-enforcement agencies to unleash their collective fangs on dope pushers and smugglers.” A group convened by the civil-rights leader A. Philip Randolph urged that “a life time sentence without parole be made the punishment to meet the crime of pushing narcotics.” Testifying at a state hearing in 1969, Hulan Jack—a black state assemblyman representing Harlem, and the former Manhattan borough president—called for life imprisonment for the crime of mugging, and argued that the system of incarceration was not nearly mass enough. (The prison population had been declining despite a sharp increase in arrests.) A 1973 *Times* poll found that “about three-quarters of New York’s blacks and Puerto Ricans” thought that life without parole was the proper sentence for convicted drug dealers.

Rockefeller’s drug laws sharply increased the penalties for various drug crimes; possession of four ounces of heroin, for instance, would result in a minimum sentence of fifteen years to



life. (In the two decades that followed, the prison rolls in New York quintupled; other states followed, creating a nationwide prison boom.) But Reverend Dempsey, the militant Baptist standing behind Rockefeller on that January day, was not representing the black political establishment. Many of the leaders and groups in Fortner's book were careful to pair calls for more police with calls for police reform, mindful of the possibility that the "fangs" of law enforcement might sink into the wrong necks. The Rockefeller drug laws passed with hardly any help from black legislators, all but one of whom voted against them. When it counted most, black political support melted away. Fortner hastens to explain that many Democratic legislators had partisan concerns (the bill's passage was viewed as a Republican victory) and distinct cultural identities—black political élites, he writes, tended to be more optimistic about Harlem than their working- and middle-class constituents were. He points out that a number of community leaders stood with Dempsey to support the bill. And he establishes that black politicians and clergymen helped raise the alarm about drug crime in the first place. Even so, the vote makes it hard to conclude that black political support was decisive in the passage of the Rockefeller drug laws.

Fortner's narrative mainly reveals the bleakness of the choices facing black voters and their representatives in those tempestuous years. Statewide rehabilitation efforts had failed, owing in part to lack of funding, and so many civic leaders viewed a new punitive regime as an improvement: it wouldn't help reform the addicts or dealers, but it might help protect everyone else. A decade later, during the crack years, African-Americans in Congress faced a similarly difficult choice in considering the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986. The law established a minimum sentence of five years for trafficking five hundred grams of cocaine or five grams of crack cocaine. Years later, activists criticized this hundred-to-one disparity as unfair to African-Americans, who were more likely to be convicted of selling crack cocaine. But the bill passed with support from

two-thirds of the African-Americans then in Congress, including Charles Rangel, from Harlem, whom President Reagan singled out for praise during the signing ceremony.

None of this directly refutes Alexander's argument that the modern carceral state is a new version of Jim Crow. Indeed, Fortner thinks that black leaders, though right to be concerned about crime, were wrong to think that exorbitant mandatory sentences—rather than better-funded rehabilitation programs and structural anti-poverty efforts—were the answer. (Rangel later worked to end the crack-versus-cocaine disparity.) When Alexander calls our criminal-justice system "the new Jim Crow," she is drawing an imperfect parallel that tells us more about what this system does than about why it exists. It is possible, as Fortner shows, to be skeptical of the drug war while also noting that no small number of its supporters believed, as fervently as any activist today, that black lives matter.

On April 12th, in Coates's native Baltimore, police officers on bicycles noticed an African-American man named Freddie Gray, who saw them watching him and fled. They caught him, found a small knife, arrested him, and put him in a police van to take him to the station. By the time the van arrived there, Gray was uncon-



scious, with his spine nearly severed, and after a week he died from his injuries. The legal reaction came quickly: on May 1st, prosecutors brought charges against six officers, one of whom was charged with second-degree murder. But the first protest began even before Gray died. The uproar seemed to inspire police officers to work more cautiously and, perhaps, to disengage; arrests dropped, and the number of homicides rose. There were forty-two

murders in Baltimore in May, compared with twenty-three the previous May; in June, there were twenty-nine, compared with eighteen the year before; in July, forty-five, compared with twenty-two; in August, thirty-three, compared with twenty-six. In four months, sixty more lives were lost than in the previous year, most of them black.

It is not hard to understand Coates's frustration with analysts who use grim facts like these in order to downplay police killings. But if what happened to Freddie Gray is symptomatic of a brutal and unjust social order, isn't everyday violence—the kind that returns again and again to some neighborhoods, while leaving others mostly unscarred—symptomatic of the same thing? The horror of Gray's death shouldn't blind us to the horror of the murders that have afflicted the city since then. One need not be a Giuliani supporter to acknowledge that reducing the homicide rate is one of the most valuable things a city government can do.

Near the beginning of "Between the World and Me," Coates recalls the night the grand jury announced that it would not return an indictment against Darren Wilson for killing Michael Brown. His son retreated to his room to cry, and Coates tried to figure out what to tell him. This book is his response, but it is not until the end that Coates allows, "Michael Brown did not die as so many of his defenders supposed." A Justice Department report looked at the Ferguson Police Department and found a wide range of abusive practices, as well as "intentional discrimination on the basis of race." But another Justice Department inquiry debunked the widely reported story that Brown was cooperating, with his hands up—saying, "Don't shoot!"—when he was killed. And forensic details corroborate the claim that Brown was initially shot while trying to grab the officer's gun.

The ubiquity of video footage has increased the scrutiny of police killings, making it easier for citizens to contest official explanations that would otherwise go unchallenged. Until recently, however, no one kept a complete count of who was being shot by police officers, and why. The *Washington Post* examined reports of police shootings

in 2015 and found that this year blacks were about three times as likely as whites to be killed by police. (Because of the difference in population sizes, non-Hispanic whites still form a plurality—about fifty per cent—of all people killed by police.) A Web site called [killedbypolice.net](http://killedbypolice.net) has been tracking media reports of police killings since 2013; it finds that over the past three years blacks were about three and a half times as likely as whites to be killed by police.

These findings should disturb us, but so, too, should the fact that the racial disparity is actually wider for civilian violence. Overall, blacks are about eight times as likely as whites to be murdered. As far as we can tell, someone killed by police is less likely to be black than someone killed by a civilian. In “Ghettoside” (Spiegel & Grau), an absorbing new book about murder in an African-American community in Los Angeles, the reporter Jill Leovy writes about what she calls “the black homicide problem.” She doesn’t use this term to defend police departments; on the contrary, she uses it to indict them, writing about all the cruelty and misery that flourishes in a place where there is no “state monopoly on violence.” If anything, the outrage over relatively rare police killings should remind us just how much everyday violence—and just how much everyday inequality—we have learned to ignore.

Coates’s two books show how twinned fears of crime and punishment can be mutually reinforcing: how the historic failure of the police to keep African-Americans safe from violence can make police excesses all the more appalling. The police killing of Prince Jones was, surely, that much more disturbing to a man who remembered that when he was a boy the police had failed to protect his friend Craig. For some reformers, the key is retraining police officers to minimize violence. But Coates and Alexander warn against this kind of meliorist thinking. “A reform that begins with the officer on the beat is not reform at all,” Coates has written. To many Black Lives Matter activists, the phrase “state monopoly on violence” probably sounds more like a threat than like a reassurance.

Crime statistics in Baltimore are complicated: in the decades since Coates was a boy, murders declined, but so did the city’s population. In general, though, American crime rates have fallen since the early nineteen-nineties, and the nation’s imprisoned population—while extraordinarily high, by global standards—seems to have stopped increasing. As for police killings, each one is tragic, and each unjustified one is outrageous; police departments in Europe, for instance, are vastly less likely to kill. But there is no evidence that we are living through a modern epidemic. Although there is little reliable national data, the New York Police Department keeps records. In 1973, the year Rockefeller signed his drug laws, the department shot and killed fifty-eight people; in 2013, the most recent year in the department database, the number was eight. The Black Lives Matter protests draw their urgency from the damage that violence has done to African-American communities. But they resonate so widely because, after decades of chaos, that violence seems to have subsided.

Experts disagree about how much of this change can be attributed to policing or to mass incarceration; in many ways, crime rates are mysterious. But the decades-long decrease in crime has made it much easier for politicians to heed the activists demanding that we reform our criminal-justice system. There is some indication that this year many cities besides Baltimore are suffering from an uptick in homicides; if this trend were to continue, talk of ending mass incarceration might become politically toxic, even for African-American politicians. As Fortner’s book makes clear, no political movement can afford to ignore the kind of cruel disorder that we euphemistically call common crime. A police force that kills black citizens is adding to America’s history of racial violence; so is a police force that fails to keep them safe. Alexander may be right that our criminal-justice regime is a new incarnation of the monstrous old Jim Crow system. But this should tell us something about the desperation of the many African-Americans who supported it anyway—convinced, not wholly unreasonably, that the alternative was even worse. ♦

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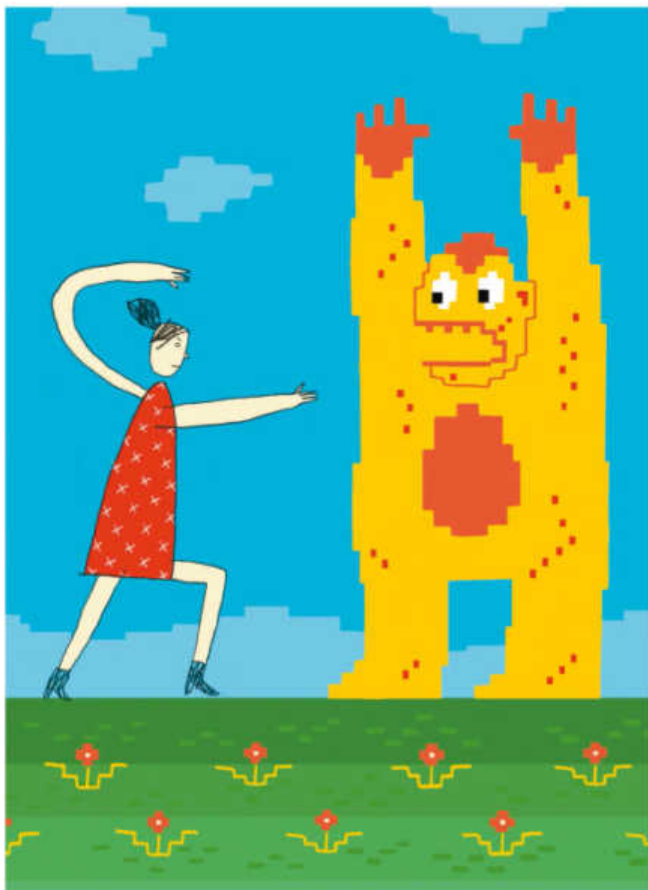
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## HIGH SCORE

*A new movement seeks to turn life's challenges into a game.*

BY NATHAN HELLER



**A**wful days, like childhood summers, flow together in a vague, compounding blur. Could your bad luck have begun on Monday, when a jumbo bottle of shampoo fell on your foot? Or were you fine until Tuesday, when your charming dinner partner—you were on a promising second date—made an excuse and bailed after the appetizers? Wednesday, fumbling to take an ill-timed call from your impatient boss, you dropped your smartphone in the toilet. By the time you got it fixed, on Thursday, you were quarrelling with your best friend, who did not appreciate your real talk on the subject of her fiancé. Now it's Friday, and you're due to give a terrifying presentation in three hours. Ragged and frayed, you leave the office for a cup of coffee and are served by a barista who is show-

ing all the symptoms of bird flu. While he coughs and doodles Art Nouveau leaves in your cappuccino foam, you discover that your credit card no longer works, and that you're down to one last dollar in your back pocket. Life isn't good.

Does the universe hate you, or are you simply coming at it the wrong way? What if, like Jason assembling his Argonauts, you made a competition of your needs and claimed your obstacles as part of an elaborate game? You have some strategies:

1. Challenge yourself.
2. Collect and activate power-ups.
3. Find and battle the bad guys.
4. Seek out and complete quests.
5. Recruit your allies.
6. Adopt a secret identity.
7. Go for an epic win.

When the bottle of shampoo lands on your metatarsals, you can turn the mishap into a game: your objective is to get from your home to your office in twenty-eight minutes, without once bending your painfully stiff foot. When your date abandons you, you might speedily identify a bad guy—in this case, the Monster of Feeling Boring and Unattractive—and spend the rest of the week battling it. You decide that this bad guy requires “adapting,” by going on dates that show your most exciting qualities (you are a swell ice-skater), and “resisting,” by buying smarter, more empowering date clothes. Boom! The monster is now in retreat.

On to your drowning phone. To fortify yourself, you enlist your tech-savvy colleague Daphne as an ally. “I am on a mission not to miss a call for twenty-four hours,” you tell her, “but I need your help to win!” True to form, Daphne redirects your cell-phone number to your laptop. Repairing your relationship with your best friend is trickier, so you frame it as a quest. Every day for the next week, you will find a different photo of you and your friend, write a little essay on the moment it depicts, and send these to her through the mail. The quest will make you better at expressing your appreciation, and may have the welcome side effect of healing your dispute.

And your cappuccino? This is a great time for power-ups: actions that make you sharper, healthier, more connected. Jogging is a power-up for you. “I need some cash—I’ll be right back!” you say, racing out to find an A.T.M. Another power-up is yogurt—its probiotics cue your brain to release anxiety-reducing neurotransmitters. Now you’re feeling potent. When you get back to the office, you assume your heroic secret identity, the Chipper Chief of PowerPoint Presentations. The Chipper Chief has a catchphrase (“Just in the click of time!”) and a theme song (“Slide Away”), and, after bucking yourself up with these supports, you stride into the conference room and give your talk with confidence. Epic win!

The idea that life’s challenges can be turned into a game in seven steps is the premise of Jane McGonigal’s “Super-Better” (Penguin), a new book that seeks to bridge the gap between video-game culture and what is now called happiness

research. Games, whether played on coffee tables or on digital screens, are usually described as escapist diversions; we don't expect those hours of sweet nothingness to help us find fulfillment in our work, build strong relationships, cultivate confidence, or nurture other traits that serve the more amorphous cause of happiness. McGonigal, however, thinks that she can transform game-playing passion into a balanced life. She calls it "living gamefully," and, according to her, it's a regimen that has the power to fix almost everything that aspirin can't.

People can use the seven principles of "the SuperBetter method" to get "stronger, healthier, and happier in the face of challenges like anxiety, depression, chronic pain, and PTSD," McGonigal writes. "You will hear stories from people who have adopted a gameful mindset to find a better job, have a more satisfying love life, run a marathon, start their own company, and simply enjoy life more." "SuperBetter," like the endgame of a chess match, plays out in a world where every problem is a power move away from its inevitable solution.

According to people who track the nation's behavior, we are halfway there already. The Entertainment Software Association, an industry coalition, reports that forty-two per cent of Americans play video games for at least three hours every week. Three-quarters of players are adults, and forty-four per cent are female. Turning the appeal of games toward useful ends would be like harnessing the energy of nuclear fission: the power is tremendous, and the mechanism seems simple and clean.

Big thinkers and big businesses have taken note. In the past half decade, "gamification"—the process of giving hard and unfun things the structure of a game—has gained adherents, from the nonprofit basement to the corporate tower. In 2007, the World Food Programme launched a popular online game, Freerice, that it uses to attract advertising money to feed the hungry; more than three million pounds of rice have been donated so far. University professors have experimented with teaching through games, as has a middle and high school in New York. Entrepreneurs, inspired by networks such as Foursquare, tout the game mechanics of their transportation and health

apps. Retailers have followed suit. If you have a sense that accruing frequent-flier miles is like working up the level structure in *Super Mario Bros.*, you are probably breathing the rarefied air of the gamified free market.

McGonigal presides over the research wing of this endeavor. As a doctoral student in Berkeley's performance-studies program, she started looking at ways that games could creep off the console and into the real world. (Her dissertation traced the intersection of two emerging movements: ubiquitous computing, which aimed to weave digital infrastructure into everyday environments—think Google Glass—and multimodal digital gaming, which sought new kinds of platforms for play.) She now works at the Institute for the Future, a nonprofit think tank in Palo Alto, designing video games for the cause of human progress. One of them, *Crypto-Zoo*, calls for groups to increase outdoor activity for better health. Another, *Superstruct*, was a global-problem-solving challenge. Her first book, "Reality Is Broken" (2011), reported that the amount of time people had collectively put into *World of Warcraft* was 5.93 million years, which is roughly the time since our ancestors first stood erect. Imagine, she suggests, if that level of engagement had been turned to real-world problems!

As an example of fruitful gamefulness, McGonigal wrote briefly in her first book of a horrendous case of post-concussion syndrome that she experienced after hitting her head in 2009. For more than a month, she had near-constant vertigo, headaches, and nausea. She had trouble with names and the thread of conversation. She found herself, uncharacteristically, depressed. Determined to recover, she renamed herself Jane the Concussion Slayer and enlisted help from her family and friends. "I felt like I was finally doing something to get better, not just lying around and waiting for my brain to hurry up and heal itself," she wrote.

The SuperBetter method is essentially a body-built version of Jane the Concussion Slayer, with a popular game and a self-improvement empire thundering behind. If McGonigal's claims for her recovery were modest in "Reality Is Broken" ("I can't say for sure if I

got better any faster than I would have without playing the game—although I suspect it helped a great deal"), they have since gained mettle. For one thing, McGonigal put her recovery game online. More than four hundred thousand people used it, and she incorporated their feedback. In 2013, a grad student at the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center led a trial of two hundred and thirty-six subjects, the larger of two SuperBetter studies. "The SuperBetter players felt better, faster, in every way we measured," McGonigal reports.

McGonigal often cites such research to bear out the rigor of her method. Mostly, though, "SuperBetter" is a how-to guide, and in this capacity it makes stringent demands. "Snap your fingers *exactly* fifty times," it orders—one of several dozen "quests" to achieve minor feats of self-improvement. (Counting snaps strengthens the brain, her research says.) "SuperBetter" is our culture's biggest foray yet into the gamification of the self, and, unsurprisingly, it goes down like a milk of twenty-first-century aspirations. It is pure, productive, upbeat, crowdsourced, putatively data-driven—proof that, in a world of knowledge and technology, the only obstacle to happiness is your own state of mind.

Alex, a public-radio producer in New York, sought relief after smashing his leg in a cycling accident:

"I was shocked at how motivating it is to have other people designing quests for me," Alex said. . . . His favorite one required him to buy his wife a flower and purchase two new toys for his cats. The twist: he had to travel to the flower shop and pet store on foot, ensuring he would get some physical exercise. "This suggestion was very smart, because I'm much more motivated to make my wife and cats happier than I am to do my own physical therapy," he said. He reported it "a huge success—I not only achieved my physical activity goal for the day, my cats and wife are looking at me like I'm their hero."

Most of the successes narrated in "SuperBetter" are huge, just as most of its practitioners are, in McGonigal's eyes, heroes. The video-game vocabulary supports a high-flown register. (An epic win, for gamers, is a long-pursued, improbable success; power-ups bolster your onscreen avatar.) McGonigal follows the philosopher Bernard Suits, who





*"But I like living in the past. It's where I grew up."*

defined games as "the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles." Golf's whimsical constraints, according to Suits, are exactly what make it gameful. McGonigal, building on the idea, holds that life's challenges become more entertaining if we add new, fun constraints to their basic demands.

Does it work? Yes, to the extent that Alex took a walk and now believes his cats find him heroic. If mood and outlook start in the mind, they can be manipulated there, too. Still, checking off a to-do list is hardly the far boundary of human happiness. And proof remains elusive for McGonigal's loftier promises: that her method yields physical vigor, mental harmony, and—perhaps her most remarkable claim—a life "free of regret."

McGonigal often turns to biological phenomena to elaborate the seven rules of the SuperBetter method. The bodily sensations of anxiety and excitement are nearly identical, she writes, and, if you convince yourself that every threat is a challenge, "your brain can't always tell the difference." Having friends—or allies—around can cause cortisol levels to drop, indicating a decrease in stress. Power-ups raise "vagal tone," the activity of the vagus nerve, which governs parasympathetic func-

tion. The catalogue of benefits proceeds from there.

Unfortunately, physiological processes tell us little about the circumstances, or the mind, that created them. If you blush, it might be because you're embarrassed; or it might be because you're sexually aroused. It would be wrong to conclude that all blushing people are turned on by whoever is talking to them. But this is the logic that McGonigal often follows.

Take the matter of "self-efficacy," a trust in one's ability to do what needs to be done. Many psychologists believe that it's a big part of sustained, productive happiness. McGonigal concentrates on one of its measurable traces, dopamine, the neurotransmitter involved in motivation. Another thing that raises dopamine levels, she points out, is playing video games. She cites a study in which kids who played at least nine hours a week showed high dopamine levels, and more gray matter in their reward-processing centers, than kids who didn't. She generalizes from here. "Work ethic is not a *moral virtue*," she writes. "It's actually a *biological condition* that can be fostered, purposefully, through activity that increases dopamine." If you want your daughter to be President, in other

words, make sure she gets her daily hours of Candy Crush.

Yet dopamine levels increase under the influence of many things: sex, blackjack, sunny days, and brownies of all recipes. If this were all it took to get ahead, then Charlie Sheen would be the highest-functioning man in the world. That a focussed pursuit involves some neurohormonal surge doesn't mean that you can translate the surge back into the focussed pursuit—work ethic is shaped by more than just the presence of dopamine. Perhaps there's even insecurity or other bad guys in the mix.

In the SuperBetter realm, though, every leisure act must have a purpose. Games have long served a socializing function (mah-jongg nights, Wimbledon), but McGonigal makes stronger claims for video games: she says that they establish measurable mind-body melds between players. If you want to mind-meld gamefully but lack a console, she advises that you and a partner go for a walk, sit in twin rocking chairs, or lift heavy furniture—an activity reported to be "like playing a video game," because "you have to successfully anticipate your partner's thoughts and movements."

This is the crest point of a culture that holds "productivity" to be a value in itself. It doesn't really matter what you are producing, as long as you're doing it constantly; it's fine to sit in rocking chairs with a friend or buy your wife flowers, provided that you're getting something measurable from the transaction. "SuperBetter" lies at the intersection of self-improvement and selfishness. It channels human strength so beautifully that most things human in it gradually fall away.

For most of history, counting one's daily steps or tracking one's heart rate would have seemed pointless and insane. Now it's something to discuss at lunch. Advances in mobile technology have brought many great things to our world, but perhaps the greatest is a new potential for data collection and, only a bit behind that, ideas about what on earth to do with all that data. Self-improvement has fared well. Previously banished to the back shelves of the bookstore—or, worse, the front shelves—self-help is cool again, because



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it comes with numbers. Progress is trackable, like Venus through the night sky. Data has become our diet.

“SuperBetter” purports to march in this positivist parade. But sometimes its suggestions are obscure in origin. For weight loss, McGonigal counsels that you imagine yourself as a ninja and summon the *godai*, the five elements in Japanese Buddhist theology. Elsewhere, she proposes that, for a better self-image, you might try reordering the letters of your name. The less nutty ideas in “SuperBetter” are, generally speaking, less new. There’s nothing specifically gameful about surrounding yourself with people who care, whether they are called “allies” or not.

McGonigal goes further, though, suggesting that her more purely gameful instructions—the proprietary parts of her method—are just as demonstrably beneficial. If the premise of her earlier work was that a spoonful of sugar can indeed help the medicine go down, “SuperBetter” insists that the sugar is nutritious, too. Like many pop-science writers, she likes the idea that research has rendered a binary verdict (does the experiment show something, or not?), ignoring the magnitude and the context of the results (are the effects distinct enough to matter?). The result in a self-help context can be strange. “If you want to be physically stronger,” she writes at one point, “hum for 60 seconds.” Really?

Her research is more compelling when it sticks to the science of game-playing itself. One study shows that when people play Tetris within six hours of seeing a disturbing image they are much less likely to have flashbacks. The results are replicable with other video games, but only those which involve non-stop visual-pattern processing. The theory is that flooding the visual-processing centers of the brain with something else distracts the mind—though subjects seemed to have no trouble voluntarily remembering details of the image. McGonigal points out implications for P.T.S.D. treatment: offering victims a Tetris console in the chopper as they leave the battlefield could spare them a great deal of suffering. In a related experiment, patients were made to play the 3-D virtual-reality game Snow World while having their severe burn injuries cleaned and

dressed. The game reduced their sensation of pain by thirty-five to fifty per cent (a greater effect than morphine, in some cases). It seemed that the demands of a fast-paced 3-D challenge monopolized the patients’ cerebral resources. Their brains didn’t have the bandwidth to process all the pain information coming from their nerves.

Discoveries like these make a powerful case for the effects of certain games on minds and bodies. They’re refreshing in McGonigal’s book, too, because they are actually about using games in life, rather than about turning life into a game. It’s inconvenient, then, that these studies also hobble the premise of the SuperBetter method. McGonigal’s program aims to build on the “connection between the strengths you naturally express when you play games and the strengths you need to be happy, healthy, and successful in real life.” Yet the Tetris and Snow World studies show a disconnection between the game mind and the mind we use in life. The immersive world of video games, they suggest, numbs us to our own.

What we’re doing, when we imagine real tasks as quests, is tuning out. Rather than moving through the world, attentive to its logic and form, we’re following a story created by someone else. A gamefully minded person can find life models in “any heroic narrative, real or fictional—film, comics, TV, mythology, video games, literature, history, religion, social activism, or sports,” McGonigal writes. (In other words, find a story in the media and emulate it.) Her own favorite examples seem to come via the multiplex; she cites *Mulan*, *Rocky Balboa*, and *Katniss Everdeen*. But what about *Inspector Clouseau*? Kids look to superhero stories as beacons in a world they’re ill equipped to understand. Adults, probably, can manage more.

Gamification flies the flag of innovation, but its effect is the opposite. Far from freeing the mind, the approach habituates us to the tidy mechanisms of effort and reward, to established paths, and to prefab narratives. In life, most stories do not climax in the third act and end in heroism. In a 2011 essay on morality, the late political and legal philosopher Ronald

Dworkin suggested, “The final value of our lives is adverbial, not adjectival—a matter of how we actually lived, not of a label applied to the final result.” He meant that the shape of a life, the arc of its story line, was beside the point—if that were all it was about, fiction would serve just as well. Instead, he thought, the value of a human life came in the act of its performance, “a rising to the challenge of having a life to lead.”

When McGonigal urges us to pave over real life with the smooth surfaces of her laminated play scripts, her goal is to hide the bad stuff. Is that heroic? Say a family member dies. According to the SuperBetter method, you should turn your regret into a bad guy, do your power-ups, tell trustworthy people that you need their gameful help to lick the grief and move on with your life. Maybe you’re successful; you feel better quickly and go back to work. Have you, in that case, won the game? “SuperBetter” aims to eliminate unpleasant feelings or weakness—anything, really, that gives human character its distinctness and depth. Living gamefully means tuning out so much of the experience of actual life that you can wonder whether the gains are worth it.

If the stories of most lives were transformed into objects, they’d look ravaged: torqued, misbalanced, bent at awkward angles, fascinating. Few people would, on reflection, trade theirs for sleek and well-formed heroes’ arcs. Imagine that, as Friday nears its close, you take stock of your gameful day. You’re happy. Things at work are going well. Your friend is speaking to you again, and you have made a date—at the rink—for tomorrow afternoon. Is that much better? As the sun goes down and you head home, you let yourself unravel for a moment in the street. Your feet are tired. You’re alone. This isn’t what you dreamed of, but the realization is reassuring: it carries the unexpectedness of your own future. Maybe, you think, you’re ready to stop getting SuperBetter for a while. Or are you? You decide that it can wait until the morning. In the end, it’s just a game. ♦

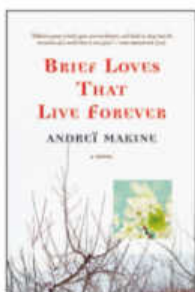
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NO COMMENT DEPARTMENT

*From the Greensboro (Ga.) Lake Oconee News.*

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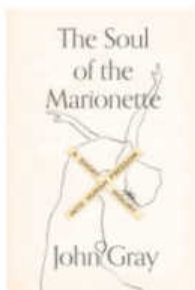
## BRIEFLY NOTED



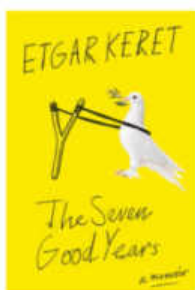
**BRIEF LOVES THAT LIVE FOREVER**, by Andreï Makine, translated from the French by Geoffrey Strachan (Graywolf). This elegant, powerful novel—about love in Brezhnev-era Russia—unfolds in a series of “insistent and elusive” encounters recalled by the narrator, a middle-aged man who grew up in a Soviet orphanage and realizes that the Communist utopia is a “failed project.” Like Proust, he pursues the “fleeting paradise” found in unexpected moments of tenderness. But the constraints on life in a totalitarian state linger around the edges of the novel: an early love goes unconsummated because hotels won’t accept unmarried couples; the narrator bristles at “officialdom,” censorship, and restrictions on travel. “Love is in essence subversive,” he recognizes, but he is a reluctant dissident.



**THE SUNLIT NIGHT**, by Rebecca Dinerstein (Bloomsbury). This darkly charming debut novel takes a thoughtful look at the uncertainty of young adulthood. Frances, a recent college graduate, flees her parents’ Manhattan apartment and their disintegrating marriage to apprentice with an eccentric painter on an island in the Norwegian Sea. In the land of perpetual sunlight, she meets a heartbroken Russian teen-ager from Brighton Beach who has come to bury his father—per his instructions—“at the top of the world.” He and Frances fall into a relationship that provides solace from the familial strife that haunts them both. Dinerstein’s prose is detailed, and keeps the novel grounded as the characters face the arctic summer’s end.



**THE SOUL OF THE MARIONETTE**, by John Gray (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Subtitled “A Short Inquiry Into Human Freedom,” this book is pervaded by the signature skepticism of its author, a British philosopher. Trapped in bodies, burdened by mortality, and “cursed with self-reflective thought,” we are limited in our freedom. Gray dismisses modern rationalism, with its faith in human progress, as a kind of Gnosticism made from “scraps of decayed Christianity,” whose central myth is that knowledge will set us free. Spirited tours through the lives and work of various artists add texture to his provocative arguments. Why not boldly submit to your ignorance? he asks, rhetorically. Of course, we’re free to choose not to.



**THE SEVEN GOOD YEARS**, by Etgar Keret (Riverhead). These autobiographical essays—Keret’s first work of nonfiction—recount the seven years between the birth of the author’s son and the death of his father, blending the political with the personal (he lives in Israel, where the two are closely allied) and the banal with the extraordinary. Keret attracts oddballs, and he renders their “every wart and wrinkle” with compassion. The absurdist, often Borgesian methods of his fiction are an odd fit for memoir, and yet through Keret’s eyes the world is a more complex and humorous place, in which the game Angry Birds is a socially acceptable outlet for terrorist impulses, and “You’ll never find a taxi,” shouted in a noisy night club, becomes “Kiss me.”

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# MASS SEDUCTION

*The Weeknd broadens his erotic thrillers.*

BY CARRIE BATTAN



In 2009, a British television producer named Erika Mitchell began writing fiction inspired by “Twilight.” Initially written under the pseudonym Snowqueens Icedragon, her stories, which she first published on the Web site FanFiction, are erotic thrillers about a sadomasochistic romance between a graduating college student and a powerful businessman. Mitchell wrote them almost like daydream diaries. “I can’t own people’s reaction to the books,” she has said. When the first installment was published, in 2011, with the title “Fifty Shades of Grey,” it quickly became one of the best-selling books in history. Chris-

tian Grey, the businessman, became a household name, bringing sexual deviance to the pulp-fiction-reading masses.

The same year, a spiritual ally of Grey’s emerged in the world of R. & B. Abel Tesfaye, the Canadian singer known as the Weeknd, released his first three mixtapes in quick succession: “House of Balloons,” “Thursday,” and “Echoes of Silence.” They explored a world of unrelenting depravity, each night darker and filled with harder drugs than the previous. In this uneasy setting, women are anonymous and love is an alien force with no hope of breaking through the

singer’s callousness. Tesfaye, who is now twenty-five, sings almost exclusively in the first and second person and puts the listener in the path of his punishing gaze. “Baby, when I’m finished with you, you won’t want to go outside,” he sings on “Outside.” Tesfaye himself was shadowy at first, declining interviews and avoiding cameras, but his work spoke loudly. Morally bankrupt but artistically pure, the records felt like fully formed erotic thrillers of their own.

Sonically, Tesfaye broke with tradition, too, crafting a bruised, lo-fi style that brushed aside the boilerplate of commercially viable R. & B. while holding on to its strong melodic sensibility. He represented a welcome foil to the reigning male stars of the genre, such as Ne-Yo and Trey Songz, indistinct singers who often succumbed to safe, sterile songwriting. (Other R. & B. stars, like Usher and Chris Brown, tried to distinguish themselves by dabbling in electronic dance music.) Tesfaye took a more deconstructed approach. His mixtapes move slowly but dramatically; they’re filled with extended intros, suspenseful shifts, and ghoulish vocal samples that surface and submerge at crucial moments. Along with artists like Frank Ocean and How to Dress Well, Tesfaye helped create a left-field faction of R. & B. While sonically disparate, collectively this group showed that the genre hadn’t closed its doors to innovation.

Even after signing with a major label, Tesfaye preserved his wicked persona. (To promote the release of his proper debut, “Kiss Land,” in 2013, he gave away condoms.) But the qualities that made him such a captivating artist—his lack of remorse, his lurid nighttime adventures, and the black-and-blue fog of sound surrounding them—threatened to prevent him from reaching bigger audiences. When he did appear in the mainstream, it was at the behest of a bigger star, his fellow Toronto native Drake, for whom he did a haunting vocal on a song called “Crew Love,” from 2011. And then, last year, he joined Ariana Grande on her hit “Love Me Harder,” adding a dash of poison to her otherwise saccharine album.

*His new album is filled with exhaustive—and exhausting—romantic nihilism.*

But it was not until Tesfaye scored a spot on the soundtrack for the film adaptation of “Fifty Shades of Grey,” which came out in February, that he emerged from the shadows. The pairing reeked of gimmickry, but it was effective. “Earned It,” a creeping ballad filled with dramatic orchestral flourishes, reached No. 3 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in May. Soon Tom Cruise was lip-synching Tesfaye’s newest single, “Can’t Feel My Face,” on Jimmy Fallon’s “Tonight Show.”

Tesfaye’s new album, “Beauty Behind the Madness,” is his bid for mainstream stardom, and it’s an impressive one. Any attempt at a crossover requires concession, and concession is especially risky for an artist who is so conceptually unyielding. One of the record’s opening lines is “I’ll be the same, never changed for nothing,” and for the most part Tesfaye makes it clear that he has no interest in moral redemption for the sake of success; the record is filled with the sort of exhaustive—and exhausting—nihilism that would make Bret Easton Ellis proud. When Tesfaye coos a line like “I’m a care for you,” it reads as a threat rather than as a reassurance. He is prone to obsessive navel-gazing, as on “Prisoner,” a song that begins airily before descending into almost cartoonish despair. “I’m addicted to a life that’s so empty and cold,” he sings. If “Beauty Behind the Madness” represents a departure from earlier Weeknd records, it is in terms of sound quality: Tesfaye’s cavernous, booming style is rendered in high definition,

making for a lavish, expensive-sounding album.

Tesfaye is credited in the writing of all the songs on the record and in the production of most, and where he uses outside help his collaborators often adapt to his style. The Swedish producer Max Martin contributed to three songs, although you might not be able to guess which ones by listening to them. It says a lot—about Tesfaye’s talents, and about the elasticity of pop music right now—that a monolith like Martin is willing to absorb the sound of a formally untested provocateur. Kanye West has a production credit on “Tell Your Friends,” a gentle song that harks back to West’s soul-sampling heyday. Here Tesfaye emerges from his inner turmoil to chest-puff, taking a bird’s-eye view of his own unlikely rise: “Don’t believe the rumors, bitch, I’m still a user / I’m still rocking camo and still roll with shooters,” he sings. “My cousin said I made it big and it’s unusual / She tried to take a selfie at my grandma’s funeral.”

Musicians tend to run from comparisons to other musicians, unless that musician is Michael Jackson. Tesfaye’s voice is eerily similar to the late King of Pop’s—a piercing, high-pitched tenor with an alluring androgyny. Tesfaye is proud of this: in 2011, he released his own version of “Dirty Diana.” Jackson looms large over “Beauty Behind the Madness,” which bridges noirish R. & B. and a full-bodied synth-pop that would sound at home in Quincy Jones’s catalogue. The album is what Jackson

might have sounded like had he used music as a tool for channelling perversion rather than for distracting from it. Nostalgia in pop music advances chronologically, of course, and after the lite-disco and funk revival of 2013—Daft Punk’s “Get Lucky” is still echoing faintly across the horizon—we now sit squarely in the nineteen-eighties. Tesfaye joins Taylor Swift and Carly Rae Jepsen in their successful attempts to refurbish that decade for today’s pop audiences.

If you haven’t finished (or started) the books, you can probably guess how the “Fifty Shades” series winds up for Grey and Steele. Even the coldest men can buckle for the comforts of companionship, and even the most extreme of kinks can become quotidian. On “Beauty Behind the Madness,” Tesfaye tries on a good-guy suit during a few low-stakes moments. He grows sentimental on “Angel,” a melodramatic piano-and-electric-guitar ballad that could have played during the closing credits of an eighties thriller. “Time will tell if we’re meant for this / And if we’re not, I hope you find somebody,” he sings. This is an awkward moment, and not entirely natural for Tesfaye. When he tries to shift his lyrics from XXX to PG-13—“We can sex all night,” he sings, on “As You Are”—he sounds a bit forced. Grey’s transformation happens smoothly. But the path of a pop star cannot hope to resolve itself as tidily as a blockbuster novel does. This year has proved that the world is eager for Tesfaye’s heartless debauchery. What will happen when he grows bored with it? ♦

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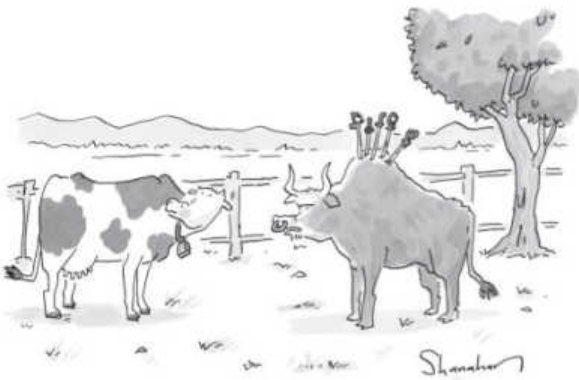




## CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

*Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Drew Dernaovich, must be received by Sunday, September 13th. The finalists in the August 31st contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the September 28th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit [contest.newyorker.com](http://contest.newyorker.com).*

### THE WINNING CAPTION



*"I didn't mean your day wasn't hard, too."*  
Bev Beer, Princeton, N.J.



### THE FINALISTS

*"I just need one of those little umbrellas."*  
Robert Green, Delhi, N.Y.

*"Tap is fine."*  
Lauren Waits, Atlanta, Ga.

*"I'm on a bar crawl."*  
Sarah Prensky-Pomeranz, San Francisco, Calif.

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



“

”

What did one lizard  
say to the other?



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